六畳間の侵入者!?

健速
Takehaya

18

Darkness
Rainbow
六畳間の侵略者!? 18

魔法少女(?)
レインボゥナナ
復活計画、始動!
科学班
霊力班
衣装班
「……よろしくお願いします、皆さん」

「たあああああああああっ!!」
「真希イイイイイイッ!!」
激突！
ネイビーVSクリムゾン

The Girls' Evening

PART 1

Wednesday, September 8

With the school restarting, all club activities began preparing for the culture festival. That included the knitting society that Koutarou was part of. Together with the other two members, Harumi and Yurika, they were currently gathered in the club room, discussing what to put out for display. They could have done it in room 106 as well, but this was a matter of feeling.

“I will put out this muffler as it is”

“Well, you just started so that sounds about right”

The knitting society would be displaying the knittings they've created at the club. Having started just a short while ago, Yurika had been working on her basics and did the same thing Koutarou did last year, which was simply knitting. Yurika would adjust her work a little and display it as a muffler.

“What will you do, Sakuraba-senpai?”

“...Which should I pick?”

This was Harumi's third year. She had already completed standard things such as sweaters and gloves to more complex things such as stuffed animals and a handbag. So picking one to display was a vexing problem.

“Why not just display all of them?”

However, it wasn't as vexing of a problem to Koutarou. He believed that since she had made so many, she should just show them all off.

“But... then it will just be an exhibition of my stuff...”

Harumi furrowed her brows. Her worries was about the numbers of items on display. Yurika only had her muffler and Koutarou only had a couple of works of his own. So if she displayed all of her own work, it would be a one-man show. Being serious and modest, Harumi felt like that was going too far.

“It's fine that way. You'll have to retire from the society soon anyways, so why not show off?”

“Yeah, he's right. It would be a boring exhibit with only a few things, so we should fill it up with Sakuraba-senpai's work or we won't get any display space for next year's culture festival”

Koutarou and Yurika backed up Harumi's display for different reasons. After thinking for a while, Harumi nodded with a bit of reservation left within her.

“Okay, then I'll display a couple...”

Harumi was attached to several of her works. Through her experience with the plays, she also knew the joys of having others recognize her work. Being a show off wasn't good, but not showing anything wasn't good either.

“Alright, then this year is Sakuraba-senpai's one-man show!”

“Satomi-san and I will put our exhibits in the corner!”

Koutarou and Yurika decided that the focus of the exhibit should be Harumi's work. That would improve the image of the exhibition and they could have hope that it would lure new members to them for next year.

“W-Wait a minute, you two!”

Harumi had matured and was able to express herself, but when they were being this obvious even Harumi instinctively blushed.

PART 2

Having decided roughly on how to proceed, the three headed back to room 106. From there, Harumi was going to travel through Clan's Hazy Moon to her own room. Using teleportation was faster than taking a bus and she could also talk to her friends on her way home. There was nothing but good things.

“For the time being. I will prepare stands and panels, so can I leave the decorations to you two?”

Koutarou wrote the rough arrangement of their exhibition on a piece of scrap paper and proposed that Yurika and Harumi took care of the decorations. He believed the girls' delicate senses would be of more use than his when it came to decorating, and he could focus on the physical labor.

“I understand”

“I will try... “

Harumi's firm nod felt reliable, but Yurika seemed less so as she slurped down her instant noodles. However, Yurika wasn't

someone who would intentionally break her promises so Koutarou didn't think much of it.

“But I'm sorry for making you do all the physical labor, Satomi-kun...”

The exhibition stands and panels were heavy and Harumi felt bad for sort of pushing all of the heavy labor onto Koutarou. However, Koutarou responded by shaking his head as he thought nothing of it.

“It's fine. The right person for the right job, you know”

Koutarou was aware that his sense of beauty was lacking. In comparison, he was confident in his physical strength.

“That's right, Sakuraba-senpai. If we didn't do it this way, Satomi-san and I wouldn't have a leg to stand on... slurp slurp slurp...”

“Eat or speak, pick one”

“...Slurp, slurp, slurp...”

“Your right job is eating ramen, huh...”

“Fufu”

Koutarou and the others enclosed the tea table and continued discussing. After some time had passed and details were determined, the other girls who had kept quiet to not get in the way began speaking.

“By the way, Theia-chan, what will the drama club be doing?”

The first one to open her mouth was the chattering enthusiast Shizuka. Her interest was directed towards Theia and the drama club. With Koutarou and the others discussing about the cultural festival, she recalled the drama club. Theia who received the question paused her game and turned to Shizuka.

“Since the reception of last year's play was so good, they're supposedly going to do 'The Silver Princess and the Blue Knight' again”

“So you'll be getting busy then?”

Maki, sitting next to Shizuka joined in. While she could care freely play games now, once the preparations for the play began she wouldn't be able to play around like that.

“No, I won't be getting involved this time.”

However, Theia shook her head and her beautiful golden hair shook left and right.

“Is that so?”

Maki's eyes opened wide from Theia's unexpected answer. The others who heard her reacted the same way and were all thoroughly surprised.

“Indeed. The other day, the president passed the flame on to the next generation, and while they were at it they decided to replace all of the staff and cast and start from scratch. And so I won't be intervening. At most I'll answer questions”

“Ah, I heard about that”

Listening to Theia, Koutarou stopped his own work and interrupted.

“Supposedly Mackenzie will be playing the Blue Knight. It feels kinda strange...”

Koutarou flashed a wry smile. Last year, Koutarou had ended up stealing that role from Kenji, but with the hero and heroine being replaced, Kenji returned to the Blue Knight role. Since Kenji looked better than Koutarou did, he believed that he would be able to perform the Blue Knight role better than him.

“I'm sorry to hear about that, Theia-dono”

Kiriha smiled slightly as she poured tea into her own cup. She knew that Theia was very invested in the Blue Knight and figured that Theia would feel a bit sad. That's because Theia's Blue Knight was Koutarou, and Koutarou alone.

“Certainly, it's not like those feelings aren't present... techniques are succeeded, having each generation do things their own way is a forward and brave way of thinking. It's the correct decision and it will lead to the club becoming more active”

However, Theia wasn't as disappointed as Kiriha had imagined. She believed it was good for multiple interpretations of a scenario to exist. In the past she hadn't felt that way, but the current her had begun to believe in that. The reason for that was because the boy named Koutarou had been given an interpretation of that of the Blue Knight by the Blue Knight's legend.

There was also another reason for Theia's line of thinking. She smiled wryly as she spoke it.

“Besides... since Koutarou is acting out his own legend, there's no need for a play. Knowing the truth, there's no need for me to interfere”

Koutarou was the Blue Knight himself. At least that was how Theia perceived it, even though Koutarou didn't recognize it himself. Having Koutarou act as the Blue Knight was the only correct interpretation. But that wasn't art, but something more like a documentary. It was nothing but a reproduction showing what the Blue Knight was like.

Last year it was still possible to call it art, but the current Koutarou and the others couldn't be called art anymore. That was the reason why Theia didn't mind the generational change.

“That may be what Her Highness is saying, but her true feelings are that she doesn't want to show Master to the public”

“H-Hey! Ruth!”

But when Ruth exposed what Theia wanted to keep hidden, Theia completely changed as she blushed and panicked. However, that just served to prove that what Ruth was saying was the truth.

“I'm only doing this for the sake of art! I definitely wasn't thinking of monopolizing Koutarou's true appearance for ourselves!”

“Theia-dono, Ruth didn't say that much”

“Uh...”

As Kiriha pointed that out Theia stumbled for words. Seeing that, Kiriha smiled happily. However, that wasn't because she was making fun of Theia, but because she sympathized with her.

“But... I agree in wanting to monopolize him. If we were to take part in the Blue Knight play then we would need to openly expose what is precious to us”

“...W-Well, something like that”

Theia had been shaken up, but with Kiriha showing some understanding, she was able to recover a little. While she was embarrassed, she didn't mind her friends knowing her real intentions. Many girls should be feeling the same thing after all.

“That's right, knights! I forgot!”

That was when Sanae who was clinging onto Koutarou's back quickly got off. She then moved around Koutarou to face him.

“What now, all of a sudden?”

“Employ me, you bastard!”

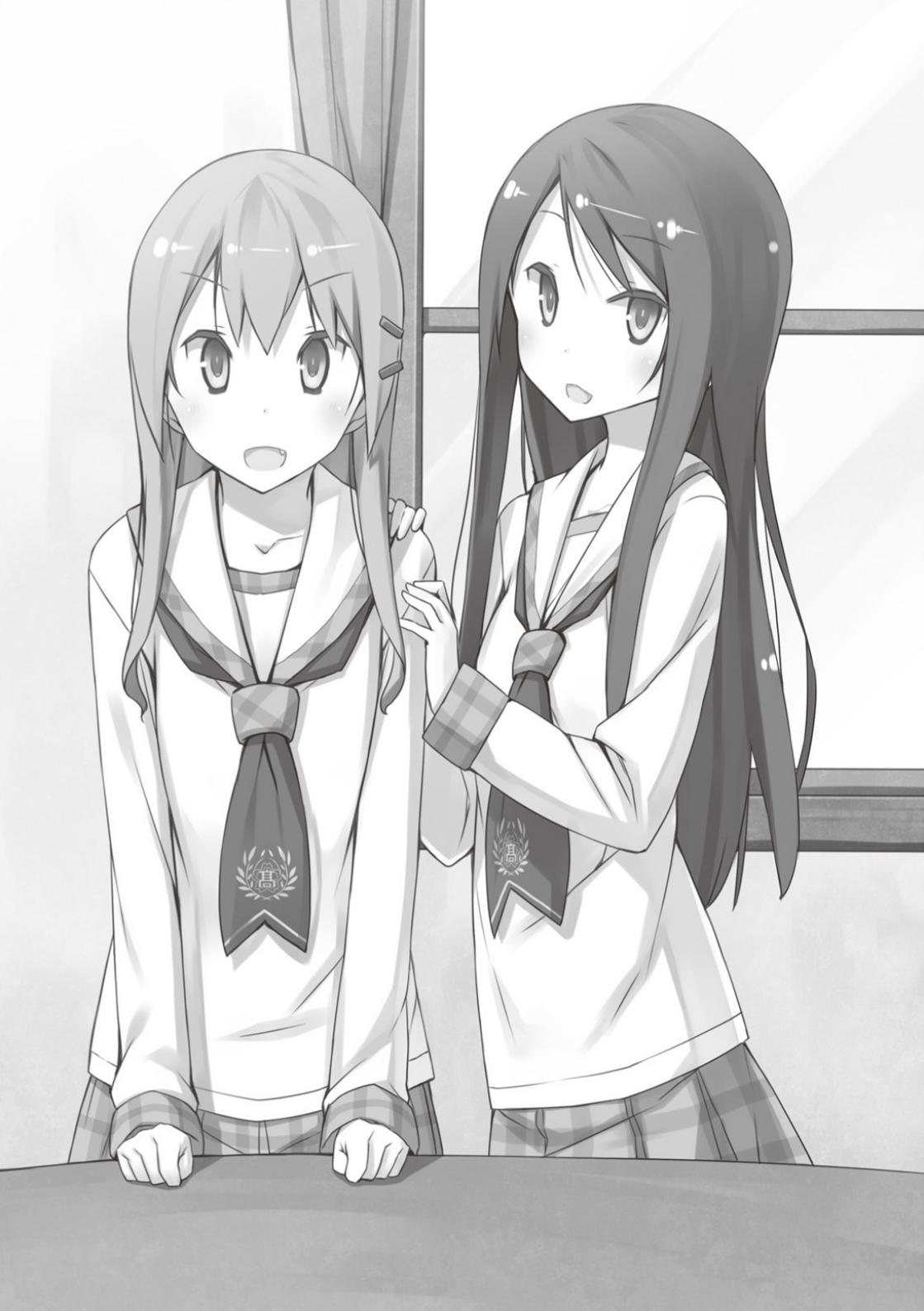
Sanae leaned forward and vigorously complained to Koutarou. But since she had omitted subject and description, Koutarou simply looked at her in confusion.

“What are you talking about? Explain it to me properly”

“You promised me before! Once the mess around Kiriha was cleaned up, you would let me into your band of knights!”

“Ah! Now that you mention it”

With Sanae's explanation Koutarou finally remembered. Sanae wanted to joined the Satomi band of knights, but her admission had been put off until later in order to not stimulate the radical faction. This was because the radical faction might sense danger if the powers targeting room 106 began to unify.



However, the radical faction was disbanded after the incident a while back. There was no longer anyone left that would sense danger if the residents of room 106 joined the band of knights. Now that the summer vacation was over and room 106 was back to normal operation, Sanae finally remembered.

“So there you have it, hurry up and employ me you bastard! As the housework help!”

“Is that the kind of attitude you have when asking someone for something!?”

“Employ me you bastard! As the secretary!”

“Y-You too, senpai!?”

Harumi who was next to Sanae jumped into the discussion as well. She mimicked Sanae's tone and demanded the same thing. Seeing her act like that, Koutarou remembered that he had made a similar promise to her as well.

Well, things have taken a strange turn... but now that they mention it, there are no problems...

After thinking for a moment, Koutarou began feeling like fulfilling Sanae's and Harumi's request. He did promised them, and the problems with the underground people was solved. There should no longer be anyone objecting to the two joining.

“W-Wait! Sanae, Harumi! I ask that you wait with joining for a while!”

However, there was someone in room 106 who objected to the two joining the Satomi band of knights. It was none other than the

princess who the band of knights were supposed to protect, princess Theiamillis.

“Your Highness, why are you in such a hurry? Is there a problem?”

Ruth who was next to Theia looked at her with confusion. She couldn't imagine there being any problems with Sanae and Harumi joining.

“There's a major problem! At this rate my band of knights will temporarily become a non-combatant band of knights! I don't want that!”

Theia had a problem with the official positions within the band of knights. Currently, the Satomi band of knights had three people. The knight leader Koutarou, the vice-captain Ruth, and the treasurer Maki. Out of these three, two were knights with only Maki being the only non-combatant. With the ratio being 2:1 at the present, they could uphold the appearance of being a battle group. But if Sanae and Harumi were to join as housework help and secretary, the ratio would reverse with a 2:3 ratio. If the ratio shifted towards the non-combatants, the band of knights would in effect become more non-combat directed.

“You're surprisingly picky about details you know”

“Koutarou! You're too indifferent yourself!”

To Theia, who held an ideal, regardless of the fact that the ideal was just for show, the band of knights should be a combat group. She didn't want to leave any records of it ever having been non-combat directed. Even more so with it being Koutarou's band of knights.

“I understand the circumstances, but... what are you going to do, Your Highness?”

Ruth smiled as she figured what was on Theia's mind and pushed the stagnating discussion forward. Normally, the knight leader, Koutarou, was in charge of personnel. Theia couldn't go on refusing Sanae and Harumi from joining out of personal emotions. A countermeasure had to be found right away.

“We'll increase our combatants by two first! If we do that the band of knights will never have been non-combat directed!”

By adding an additional two combatants and having Sanae and Harumi join after that, the ratio would be 4:3, and they could keep up their appearances as a combat group. They would be able to protect Theia's ideal of the Satomi band of knights being an organization for combat and nothing else.

“That's surprisingly makeshift for you, Theiamillis-san”

Clan smiled wryly as she read a book as she lied down on the ceiling after manipulating gravity. The operation Theia was about to do was something the past Clan would do. It didn't suit the optimistic Theia.

“Say whatever you like! This is a problem with the band of knights' identity!”

“Well, it's not like I don't understand how you feel”

Clan shrugged her shoulders and laughed a little. Truth be told, since Koutarou wasn't someone who fighting suited, the band of knights would inevitably become peaceful. That said, regardless of the truth, it was the ideal of any person from Forthorthe to keep the

Blue Knight's band of knights as a combat group. Clan also understood that.

“So, please, Shizuka! Kiriha! Join my band of knights as a martial artist and general!”

“Eh? Me?”

Shizuka who was happily listening in on the discussion opened her eyes wide. She had joked about joining before but she had never anticipated that she would be brought up with this timing.

“Asking you is the least problematic! I don't mind if you only lend us your name!”

Theia humbly requested to the two. Theia didn't want to create an actual combat group, so in that sense asking a real warrior to join would be anything but good. She didn't want to lose the warmth the group had, but at the same time she wanted to have the pretext to call it a combat group. For that sake, the best method was to ask those related to room 106 to join.

“Fufu... I understand the circumstances. I also owe you for your help with the radical faction. I will gladly join”

Kiriha understood how Theia felt and so she easily agreed to the request. She also had the pretext of not wanting to refuse Theia who had so earnestly fought for the sake of the underground people. But for Theia, the number one reason was that it seemed like fun.

“Then I'll join too”

Since Kiriha hadn't hesitated to join, Shizuka decided to join as well without really thinking much about it. Since the intelligent Kiriha

had joined without hesitation, she figured that there were no problems. It was an awfully sloppy reason for joining.

“Thank you, Kiriha, Shizuka!”

Theia shook their hands with tears in her eyes.

“Theia-dono, there's no need to cry is there”

Seeing her like that, Kiriha instinctively leaked a wry smile.

“Even if you say that! A maiden of Forthorthe could never yield on this!”

It was an ideal that Theia wanted to protect no matter what. She was charmed by the beauty of the band of knights, despite it being a means to kill.

“...What about my opinion?”

Koutarou felt perplexed as the discussion continued without including him, the leader. That was when Shizuka called out to him.

“Don't worry about it. Ah, Satomi-kun, I don't mind if my salary is just your rent”

“Thanks, landlord-san”

However, because Shizuka's smile was so bright and refreshing, he decided not to think too much about it.

It’s not like we’ll be acting like a real band of knights anyways...

The important part was whether or not everyone could have fun. This band of knights was similar to a school club in that sense.

“So Theia, what about me and Harumi joining!”

Sanae wasn't quite able to keep up with the discussion and leaned forward over the tea table as she asked Theia about the conclusion.

“Don't worry. All the problems have been resolved. You may join in triumph”

“Alright!”

“Isn't that great, Higashihongan-san”

“Yeah!”

Having finally gotten permission, Sanae showed a large, bright smile, and Harumi who was watching over her seemed very happy. The two smiled at each other for a while.

“Harumi! Harumi!”

“Yes”

After smiling towards one another for a while, they lined up in front of Koutarou as they had before and spoke in perfect harmony without having practiced at all.

“Employ us you bastard!”

“...Okay”

Since the two seemed so happy, Koutarou forgot to object and simply nodded his head.

PART 3

Thus Satomi's band of knights received another four members but the ones that rejoiced the most were Sanae and Harumi. They had been strangely excited ever since Koutarou had accepted them.

“Koutarou, Koutarou, let's decide my salary!”

“Okay, okay”

“I'll give all of it back when I get it, so make it a million yen! I want to become a well paid woman!”

“As a housework helper?”

“Yeah!”

Sanae had no intention of actually receiving any salary from Koutarou, but she wanted the truth of being paid a high salary. It was a strange operation where she would then give her salary back.

“No way”

“Why not!? I said I'll give everything back!”

“You'll need to at least keep enough for some pocket money”

Ever since she had been a ghost, Sanae had been getting an allowance from Koutarou. Her anime goods and candy had been bought with that money. Koutarou would feel bad if even that allowance ended up being returned. Honestly speaking, Koutarou wished to continue giving Sanae an allowance.

“Pocket money is different!”

“Is that so?”

“Pocket money is a test a love! It's different from a laborer's wage!”

“I don't really get it, but if you're fine with that”

“Alright, then it's decided!”

With her working arrangements determined, Sanae showed a bright smile. Nothing in particular would change from Sanae joining the band of knights. Her everyday life would continue on like it always had. However, feelings wise it was a different story. She cheerfully clung onto Koutarou's back as if saying that this would always be her place.

“So what kind of mission do I get, Satomi-kun!?”

Harumi looked just as happy as Sanae. Unlike Sanae, she had always been mentally mature, but she had purposely gone along with Sanae. As of late, Harumi had been rapidly learning how to display her feelings.

“Since I'll belong to a band of knights, it'll be something like information gathering, right!?”

Harumi made theatrical gestures as she waved her hands around and her eyes sparkled. A cheerfulness that rivalled Sanae's sparkled in her eyes.

“Of course not. I don't need any information”

Koutarou could of course see through the fact that Harumi was saying that on purpose. He could tell right away just by looking at these eyes sparkling like a child's. His answer inadvertently became

more snappish as he was somewhat embarrassed about playing with Harumi. Maybe it was because she was behaving more childishly, but she gave off a cuter impression than normal.

“So... Something like going to buy melon bread and milk?”

“What kind of a mission is that!”

“Ah, I'll have some!”

“So Satomi-kun, Higashihongan-san and me for a set of three. Would anyone else like some?”

“...Theia, Sakuraba-senpai is going on about stuff like that. What about the status for the band of knights”

Even though she might be a non-combatant member, having her first mission be to go buy melon bread and milk would surely not sit well with Theia who valued the status of the band of knights. That's what Koutarou thought as he asked Theia for help.

“Grrr... Harumi!”

Just as Koutarou had hoped, Theia showed a stern expression.

“What is it, Your Highness?”

“I desire anpan!”

“As you wish, my princess”

“Very good!”

“...I should never have relied on Theia...”

It was a common mission for a band of knights to provide support and supplies to civilians. While Theia was picky when it came to the organization's structure, she wasn't the kind of lord to refuse missions the members voluntarily chose.

“Master, isn't it a good thing that there are only peaceful missions to be had?”

“That's right, Koutarou. Do you know how happy a thing it is for a combat squad to only be playing around?”

But as Ruth and Kiriha pointed out, he gradually shifted towards acceptance. The fact that Harumi was teasing Koutarou was a proof of peaceful times. Since he didn't want his band of knights to do something fitting for a combat oriented band of knights, he felt like he should be more happy just having Harumi act like she was.

“...This is all thanks to the underground problems being resolved.”

Koutarou exhaled before muttering. Because the state of room 106 might stimulate the radical faction, they couldn't allow people to enter the band of knights or accept missions. However, with the radical faction now disbanded and the problems underground resolved, there was no longer anything to fear. Even if they played around as a band of knights there wouldn't be anyone that would question it. That was something that should be rejoiced.

“...Thanks to the underground problems being resolved...”

Yurika reacted to the words Koutarou muttered.

I see... I might be able to ask for that now...

There had been something Yurika had been wanting to ask the girls of room 106. But in order not to stimulate any of the powers, the radical faction especially, she hadn't been able to bring it up. However as she heard what Koutarou said, she realized that her request might be possible now.

“What's the matter, Yurika-san?”

Clan who had been lying down on the ceiling slowly descended next to Yurika when she noticed that she was unusually lost in thought.

“Uhm... there is actually something I would like to consult with everyone.”

“Consult... that's unusually serious for you.”

Slightly surprised by Yurika's rarely seen serious side, Clan adjusted her glasses. While she might be surprised she would intently listen.

“What is it, Yurika?”

Koutarou turned towards Yurika to listen in as well. The other girls felt the change in atmosphere and stopped talking between each other to focus on Yurika.

“You don't have to hold back. Just say it.”

”Yes, thank you. What I want to consult with everyone is about Nana-san.”

Yurika brought up her friend and teacher of magic. Her predecessor magical girl, Rainbow Nana.

“Nana?”

Maki's expression stiffened and distorted into a sad one. In the past, Nana had fought against Maki, or more precisely Darkness Rainbow, and sustained serious injuries, forcing her to retire. The current Maki regretted that, and Yurika wasn't blaming her either, but when Nana was brought up she inevitably felt sadness.

“Uhm, Satomi-san, Darkness Rainbow's Maya-san that you fought against had a body made from machines from underground right?”

“Yeah. It was made from the underground's spiritual energy technology, and most likely also the advanced science of Forthorthe.”

Koutarou nodded and affirmed Yurika's words. He had previously confirmed that it was made using the underground's spiritual energy technology. And after Elexis' involvement was revealed in the decisive battle against the radical faction, he figured that it was very likely that the advanced scientific technology from Forthorthe might have been introduced to her body as well.

“So with that... seeing as Maya-san could move around so well after being seriously injured, I figured that maybe Nana-san could be cured the same way.”

After a battle with Nana, Maya had suffered serious injuries and been forced to retire. Later on, Maki and the others defeated Nana. Nana too suffered serious injuries and Yurika ended up taking over her role. They had both been seriously injured. In that case, now that she could boldly borrow the power of both Forthorthe and the underground, Nana might be able to recover like Maya had. That was what Yurika was hoping for.

“Nana was... your savior and teacher in magic, right, Yurika?”

“Yes!”

In the past Yurika had been attacked by a demon because she had an aptitude for magic. Nana saved Yurika and became her friend. And after many incidents, she was taught magic and succeeded Nana. To Yurika, Nana was someone incredibly important.

“Kiriha-san, Theia, Clan. Could you do as Yurika says?”

Koutarou made up his mind right away. Just her being Yurika's friend was reason enough to help her. But with her also being Yurika's savior, there was no reason for him to even hesitate.

“I know. A friend of Yurika's is a friend of mine. I will gladly help”

Theia was the first to respond. Theia thought of Yurika as a precious friend and she had no reason to refuse her request. She had also heard about Nana saving Yurika in the past so she wanted to help for that reason as well.

“I don't mind either. I was interested in the underground's technology anyways. And besides, I can't refuse a request directly from Bertorion.”

Clan agreed as well. She also simply wanted to be of help to Yurika, but with her twisted personality, her expression was more roundabout.

“What about you, Kiriha-san?”

“I agree, of course. I'm sure it would be beneficial for everyone.”

Lastly, Kiriha also wanted to live up to Yurika's wishes. The girls of room 106 considered each other irreplaceable. It could be said that anyone's problem was all of their problem. If anyone was unhappy they would all suffer. That was something they wanted to avoid at all costs.

“But I want you to wait a little. Since we will be offering the underground's technology to the outside, I can't decide on my own. I have to consult with the chief first.”

While Kiriha was the commander of the surface invasion forces, she was not in control of the People of the Earth. Compared to Theia and Clan, she had less authority. As a result it would be difficult for her to supply them with something as confidential as spiritual energy technology at her own discretion.

“Please do.”

Yurika bowed to Kiriha in a serious fashion. Considering her normal carefree attitude, just seeing her do that conveyed how strongly she felt for Nana.

“Don't worry. I don't think anyone will object.”

While she didn't have the authority, Kiriha was optimistic. Since Yurika had contributed a lot to the showdown with the radical faction, the People of the Earth had no reason to refuse. Moreover, reviving Nana would also help with specifying the spiritual energy technology that had been given to Maya.

“Isn't that great, Yurika?”

“Yes. Thank you very much everyone.”

Thus, Koutarou and the others decided to cooperate to treat Nana.

PART 4

The country that magicians live in, the magical kingdom of Folsaria, was impossible to reach by walking, car, plane or boat. Folsaria existed in a different plane from this world, and magic was necessary to travel there. Similar to how Theia used a teleportation gate to travel between room 106 and the Blue Knight, people used magic to travel to Folsaria. The travel time was roughly the same as well.

The complex geometrical pattern drawn on the concrete floor shined. The pattern glowed particularly strong in the center portion. From that light a single girl appeared. It was as if she was appearing from the surface of the water.

"...I'm glad you're with us, Blue."

It was a powerful voice belonging to Dark Crimson. The crimson magician who specialized in offensive magic belonged to Darkness Rainbow, a secret society of evil that was plotting to overthrow the country of Folsaria. After she fully appeared, she walked out of the geometrical pattern, the magic circle. And just as she had appeared, another girl appeared from the center of the magic circle. It was a short cut girl wearing dark blue clothes.

"I just succeeded the previous generation so I wanted to get a good feel for it."

The girl's voice was calm and her tone polite. Her expression was indifferent as well. Compared to the dynamic Crimson, she felt a lot less animated. She was Dark Blue, one of the leaders of Darkness

Rainbow alongside Crimson. She specialized in blue magic, good for summoning and healing.

Travelling from Folsaria to Kitsushouharukaze city required you to travel through a passage made with magic, since it consumed a lot of energy, one typically travelled through a permanent passage, though those were few in numbers. However, the girls weren't using one of those. Dark Blue had used her own magic to temporarily create a passage. This kind of special means of transportation was one of the things summoning magic could be used for. While she was somewhat inferior when it came to direct combat capabilities, when it came to support she held great power.

“We're counting on you. This time you're the star.”

Following Dark Blue, another girl appeared. She had a calm voice like her, but rather than sounding indifferent, she had a more intellectual impression. Her favorite glasses only strengthened that impression. She was Dark Green. She was the magical girl who had attacked the girls of room 106 alongside Crimson.

She specialized in illusions and fortune telling, in other words information manipulation, and when it came to intelligence she was far above the others. The plan this time was something Green had designed and she would be the one leading it.

“I'll do my best.”

Blue nodded at Green's words and answered indifferently. Blue would play a major part in the plan that Green had devised. She hadn't been brought along just for transportation. However, Blue's reaction was lacking considering the expectation put into her. While she had said that she would give it her all, it was difficult to tell if she actually felt that way or not, leaving Green a little uneasy.

“Don't worry. In the case something happens, I'll do something about it.”

Sensing that Green felt uneasy, Crimson showed a fearless smile. Even if Blue failed, as long as Crimson defeated the enemies there was no problem. Unlike Blue, Crimson was filled to the brim with confidence and motivation. Seeing that, Green sighed for some reason.

“Haah... even if you've obtained powerful magic, you're underestimating the enemy too much.”

Blue didn't have enough motivation while Crimson had too much of it. Green's ideal was somewhere in the middle, but neither of them seemed close to that.

“I've waited this long because I'm not underestimating them. I've even developed and mastered new magic, I think I've endured for quite a while. That's why there's no way I'd lose.”

Using the knowledge of science and magic that Crimson had obtained through Maya and Elexis as her basis, she went through the magic she'd been using up until now and adjusted it to be more scientific and logical. As a result, Crimson gave birth to the third generation following ancient magic and modern magic. She had given this the name of scientific magic. She honestly believed that she had developed a new type of magic, that was just how much scientific magic surpassed conventional magic.

The mechanisms of scientific magic wasn't all that different from modern magic. However, the built in scientific theories greatly improved upon their effect. An example of such would be the Ray of Sunshine spell.

Like the name Ray of Sunshine suggested, the spell vaguely recreated the sun's light and the heat from that light burnt the enemy. However, with her obtained scientific knowledge, Crimson learned that there were many different wavelengths of light and having them overlap created white light. She also learned that when they overlapped there was a waste of energy. Therefore, Crimson reduced the wavelengths to a single one. There was no reason to create light with overlapping wavelengths. She only needed to create light with a single wavelength from the start. Because of this the power of the ray greatly improved, and the loss of energy was decreased, reducing the consumption of magical power, and adding the conserved magical power into the spell would cause the power to sky-rocket.

That's why Crimson was so confident. There was no way she would lose to Koutarou or Yurika the way she was now. The straight-forward Crimson had something to back up her confidence.

“The problem is that woman... Kurano Kiriha.”

Green on the other hand was cautious of Kiriha; whose talent was her brain. Her knowledge and intelligence was something to look out for. The reason Crimson and the others sought out scientific magic was because they had completely lost to Kiriha who couldn't use magic at all.

Magic was but another facet of power. What mattered was how it was used. That was the lesson they had been taught by Kiriha, and even if they obtained scientific magic, there was still a chance that Kiriha's brain could surpass them. Who knows what kind of terrifying fate awaited them if Kiriha made good use of Yurika.

“That's why we came up with this plan, right, Green?”

“That's... true, but...”

Since Green's future forecast had been defeated by Kiriha in the past, the trick was to make Kiriha unable to use her own power. If they made Kiriha unable to act, there were ways to fight the others. However, Green couldn't get rid of the anxiety she felt as the plan to incapacitate Kiriha was about to begin. The scar she had gotten after being defeated despite reading the future still remained.

“Don't worry. We've gotten stronger and we already know that woman is dangerous. Besides, Blue is with us, and this is a plan you've come up with, Green. There's no way it'd end up the same way as before”

“You're right, I'm sorry. I guess I was being a little too pessimistic.”

Green showed a faint smile as she was being cheered up. Crimson's positive way of thinking was a blessing when she was feeling insecure.

Maybe because the enemy is too strong, but... thing's have taken a strange turn...

Looking at Crimson and Green, Blue felt puzzled.

The members in organization known as Darkness Rainbow originally had shallow bonds with one another. Others were to be used, you weren't meant to worry for them or support them. In fact, the decisive battle against Rainbow Nana was used to get rid of potential rivals.

“Like Maki, you overthink things from time to time.”

“I'll try not to think. Just like you.”

“Are you making fun of me?”

“Yes.”

“Geez...”

However, the behavior Crimson and Green were showing right now had begun to deviate from that. Because their enemy was far too powerful, they had to cooperate in the true meaning of the word. If they tried using one another they wouldn't be able to defeat their foe.

But yeah, there’s no reason to use Crimson or Green right now. We can make deals later, but we can only fight now...

Cooperation and alliances was originally their opposing organization, Rainbow Heart's field of expertise. While Blue found it mysterious that they would need it as well, she understood it was necessary. She also began thinking that she would need to cooperate as well if they wanted a chance of winning.

PART 5

The center portion of Green's plan was to perform a large-scale ritual to unleash a powerful spell. That spell would serve as a preemptive strike to incapacitate Koutarou and the others. After that they would defeat them all one at a time. If they were all incapacitated Green's calculations told her that they should be able to defeat all of them with scientific magic.

“Green, what are the chances of success?”

Blue asked Green as she drew the magic circle. They were currently in a deserted house. It was wide enough for the spell, the roof was far up and the ground was sturdy. It was somewhat old and dirty, but it was more than stable enough for the ritual. Blue's voice reverberated somewhat as it was absorbed into the wide space.

“If it's a simple matter of victory and defeat than the chances of success is more than 80%.”

Green conveyed the future she had foreseen to Blue.

Her future forecast allowed her to see all possible outcomes, including scenarios where they never fight or there was no conclusion to the fight. Adding all of those futures up, their chances of victory in a fight was somewhere around 25%, but that number wasn't what Blue was after. Their chances of losing the fight was 5% and subtracting that from the total, there was roughly around an 80% chance of success.

“If it's 80% then we've pretty much won already. As long as we don't cut any corners that is.”

Crimson said as she stood up with her cane in hand. She had been helping out with the preparations of the magic circle, but she had a different job to do now.

“Alright, then I'm off. I'll leave this side to you”

“Are you fine going alone, Crimson?”

“Green, you help Blue. You're the only one that uses those weird machines that the underground people handed over”

“Alright, then leave this to us. Okay, Blue-san?”

“Yes.”

“Right, then I'll see you later.”

Crimson waved her hand and headed outside on her own. She had a job to do on the outside while the other two would create the magic circle. Being so active, Crimson much preferred to work outside over drawing a magic circle indoors. As she walked outside her steps naturally became lighter.

PART 1

Wednesday, September 8

The woman who once called herself a magical girl, Rainbow Nana was awfully small. She had a small stature to begin with but the artificial limbs that supplemented her body were imperfect, giving her a forward leaning posture. As a result her already small body looked even smaller and combined with her slow movements, she gave of the impression of an old woman.

The reason her artificial limbs were imperfect was because the scientific level of her country, the magical kingdom of Folsaria, was low. Thanks to the existence of magic, the scientific technology that should have been developed had fallen behind. Since there was a limit on human assets, with the advent of magic it was only inevitable for scientific development to be delayed. When it came to creating artificial limbs, pure scientific knowledge was required. The reason being that an academic approach was required to understand how joints were structured and how muscles moved. Without that, all that could be done was simply creating parts that were shaped like human limbs, making natural movement was all but impossible. The movement became unnatural, like that of a puppets. So with that in mind, even if Nana was moving like an old lady, it was still amazing that it was still so human-like. That was made possible thanks to Nana's extraordinary efforts.

“Nice to meet you everyone. My name is Nana.”

It was a voice that clearly belonged to an adult woman, but gave off a very cute impression. Not many years had passed since Nana

aged past 20. Hearing a voice like that come from someone who moved like an old woman with a cane confused Koutarou and the others a little.

“Yurika-chan is always in your care.”

”Nana-san is my savior and teacher. Please get along well with her.”

Yurika supported Nana's body from the side. Appearance wise it looked like a grandmother and her granddaughter.

No wonder Yurika is so desperate... to think she is just past her twenties. I feel so sorry for her...

Looking at the two together, Koutarou finally understood why Yurika who had been so timid chose to fight as a magical girl. It wasn't simply because Nana was her savior. It was because she had been deprived of her duty as a magical girl and her happiness as a woman that even the Yurika from back then chose to fight.

We definitely have to do something about this... both for Nana-san’s and Yurika’s sake...

Koutarou's desire to help Nana strengthened further. He didn't know what he could do, but he wanted to do anything he could. When Koutarou turned his eyes back from Yurika to Nana, he found her staring straight into his eyes.

“So it really was you.”

“Eh?”

Not understanding the meaning behind Nana's words, Koutarou was bewildered. Nana smiled as she used her right hand to grab at her let down hair. With many fingers of her hand being prosthetic it was a very awkward movement. But she finally managed to form a pigtail on one side of her head.

“Maybe you can't tell because more than ten years have passed?”

“Ah...”

Seeing pigtails on side of Nana's head, Koutarou recalled the mysterious girl he had met 11 years in the past. She had matured and her face had changed quite a lot, but she still had resemblance of her old self.

“You are... the girl I met in the mountains...?”

”So you do remember. Nice to see you again, good necromancer.”

Happy that Koutarou remembered her, Nana smiled. To her, their meeting that night had been a special one, and she had never once forgotten it all these years. But since she didn't know if the same was true for Koutarou, she was happy that he still remembered.

“So you were Nana-san.”

They had met on a mountain in the night, and she had helped when Kii, when Kiriha, had been kidnapped. Koutarou properly remembered her as well. He wasn't ungrateful, and since he had travelled through time it had just been a couple of months for him.

“Huh? Satomi-san, are you and Nana-san acquainted?”

“I wouldn't call us acquaintances, but... she helped me out eleven years in the past when I was on my way back home. When Kii-chan, I mean Kiriha-san, had been kidnapped”

When Koutarou said those words, Kiriha showed a surprised look. She rushed up to Koutarou and Nana and hurriedly asked a question.

“When you're talking about my kidnapping... do you mean she was the person who helped you in the back alley, Onii-chan!?”

Since this wasn't something Kiriha could overlook, she was very shaken up. As proof of that, the nickname of 'Onii-chan' which she never used in front of others was mentioned.

“Yeah. She took over for me and dealt with the people controlled by Maya, letting me go on ahead. That's why she's our savior.”

”Oh I see... Ah, no, ahem. So that's what happened. I'll have to extend my thanks to you as well.”

”Could you be the girl from that time?”

Listening in on Koutarou and Kiriha, Nana realized who Kiriha was. When she did, she smiled even more happily.

“Yes. Thank you very much for saving me on that occasion.”

Kiriha smiled in return and bowed deeply. She hadn't directly met with Nana before but she had heard about her helping from Koutarou. She couldn't be rude to her.

“It's fine. That was my mission after all.”

The person she had saved was living happily even now. To Nana, there was nothing that could make her happier. Even though she had lost her power, Nana was still a magical girl at heart.

“That's right, Sanae-chan. Nana-san is Kanae-san's friend!”

“Mama's friend!? Now that I think about it, you and Mama know each other too. What relationship do you have?”

“Yes. Kanae-san fought with Nana-san against bad people.”

”Just like us?”

“That's right, that's right!”

Having received important information from Yurika, Sanae rushed up to Nana. And unusually enough, she very politely bowed.

“I'm Higashihongan Sanae. Thank you for taking care of mother.”

”My... Sanae-san, you've gotten energetic.”

Having realized who Sanae was, Nana rejoiced for her recovery. To Nana, Kanae was her best friend and older sister sort of mixed into one, and learning that Kanae's daughter had become healthy she felt truly happy for her. Even more so because Nana hadn't been able to save Sanae on her own.

“Yeah. Yurika and everyone helped me.”

“Is that so?”

Sanae only spoke in a polite tone for her greetings. Ever since Nana began smiling she had acted like her usual self. Since Sanae gave off a more energetic impression like that, Nana prefered her that way.

“You're Mama's and Yurika's friend right?”

“Yes. They are both my precious friends.”

”Then you and I are friends too. Let Miracle Sanae know whenever you're in trouble. I'll do something.”

”Thank you very much. I'm looking forward to it.”

”Yes! Leave it to me!”

Sanae's simple and frank emotional display was easy for Nana to accept. With her also being Kanae's daughter, they were already friendly with one another. Finally, Sanae and Nana shook hands and once that was done, Sanae ran up to Koutarou.

“Koutarou! Koutarou!”

“What now, all of a sudden?”

“Hurry up and help Nana.”

”Weren't you going to do that yourself?”

”That's why I'm using my authority to make you do it.”

”...That's one way to go about it. But still, I feel the same way.”

Higashihongan Sanae, the purple housework helper of the Satomi band of knights. With her overwhelming authority and influence, she was in full control of the treatment of Nana.

“But Koutarou...”

”Hm?”

“Looking at it like this, there is absolutely no reason for us not to help Nana.”

Theia who had silently been watching over them until now concluded thusly.

Koutarou, Kiriha and Sanae had all been saved by Nana, and Yurika was Nana's apprentice. While Theia and Ruth had no direct connection with Nana, they had been helped out by her apprentice. The same could be said for Maki, Shizuka and Harumi.

She had already saved many lives, and they were greatly indebted to her. There were no reasons not to treat her. If anything they had to give it their all to help her. This wasn't someone they could dismiss using excuses of secret technology.

“Yeah, you're exactly right, Theia.”

“We can't have her laughing at us for being so ungrateful.”

“Absolutely... Nana-san.”

”Yes?”

”Because of that, could you let us cure your body?”

The residents of room 106 were all in agreement. They would create the best possible artificial limbs for Nana and give her back a healthy life. At the very least they would let her live the life of a woman in her later twenties. If they couldn't give her a life like the

ones they lived themselves, the residents of room 106 couldn't be happy either. This wasn't just for Nana's sake, but for all of them.

"...I would very much like to accept that. Thank you, everyone."

After thinking for a moment, Nana quietly nodded, probably because she understood that.

PART 2

Roughly half of Nana's body had been remade with magic. The reason her body had turned out that way was because she had poured her magical power into the magic focus point within her body before allowing to explode. She had resolved herself to death when she unleashed that attack, but through some strange twist of fate, she had evaded the grim reaper and was still alive to this day. However, having lost lost half of her body and her magic focus point she could no longer work as a magical girl. So she left Rainbow Heart and was now living a quiet life.

Nana was currently onboard the Blue Knight, receiving an examination in order to create a new body for her. She had changed into a hospital gown and was lying down on a large bed. Around her were all kinds of machines and devices, examining the condition of her body.

"Her spine seems to be curved. Maybe it's because of her mismatched artificial limbs. I believe we will need to take this into account when designing her new limbs"

"Pardomshiha, let's take complete three-dimensional data of Nana-san while we're at it. We can counteract her distorted frame by comparing the data to the average woman in her twenties."

“Certainly, Clan-sama.”

Clan and Ruth were in charge of the scientific analysis of Nana's body. This was because they would be using Forthorthe's artificial limbs as the basic parts for Nana's body. Using Forthorthe's advanced science they should be able to create limbs that would allow Nana to move more naturally than she can with her current limbs made from magic.

“Kiriha, Nana's spiritual energy flow is a mess.”

“That's not good. That would be a hindrance in her life and she won't be able to properly feel the surrounding hallowed grounds.”

The spiritual energy experts Kiriha and Sanae were in charge of the spiritual energy related work. Normally the two were frivolous or playing around, but right now they were taking work seriously. That's just how much they wanted to help Nana.

“Karama, Korama, can you correct the flow using spiritual circuits?”

“We should be able to Ho.”

“But Ane-san, it will cost a lot of money Ho-!”

”Money is not a problem. Take as much as you want from my personal assets.”

”How generous Ho-!”

“As expected of Ane-san Ho-!”

“Sanae, can you bring the disordered spiritual energy flow into view? At least the parts that Karama and Korama can't pick up with their sensors”

“Okay, leave it to me. I'll give it a shot.”

It wouldn't be all that hard to create a natural body using Forthorthe's science. However with just pure science, they would simply end up with a mechanical body. In order for Nana to properly feel the gentle breeze of the wind, the warmth of sunshine or the smell of the forest they needed the People of the Earth's spiritual energy technology. Moreover, they probably also needed the support of magic. Erasing the sound of the machinery operating and changing appearances was something magic was great for.

In other words, the girls were trying to create a substitute for the living body by combining the technology of Forthorthe and the underworld, and the magic of Folsaria. They didn't want Nana to become a cyborg, but to return her to being a normal woman. That was the common wish of all the girls that had gathered here.

“Since we're at it... I'd like to work on the externals as well. Maki, is it possible to keep skin cells healthy through magic?”

”It's possible. You cast healing magic on the body, but if it's just the skin it won't take that much magical power. I believe it's possible with the magical power you can get out of the spiritual energy converter.”

”Then let's spread skin cells over the surface. It would be such a bore if the artificial parts peeped through. Help me out, Maki.”

”Yes, Your Highness.”

Theia and Maki were planning on how to make the artificial limbs look more human. For the sake, it would be best if artificial parts couldn't be seen. This was just a problem of feelings, but it should greatly affect Nana's psychic health. This too was a very feminine consideration. In this kind of field, magic had a chance to shine alongside science.

The remaining three girls, Yurika, Harumi and Shizuka, were handling a similar problem to that of Theia and Maki.

“My outfit originally belonged to Nana-san, but I have touched up on it, so Nana-san can't wear it anymore.”

”Then let's prepare a new one. We'll base it on Yurika's outfit but give a more adult arrangement.”

“Nana-san is over 20 now, so she doesn't have that magical girl feel anymore after all.”

The three were working on a new outfit for Nana. She currently wore clothes that were easy to move in due to her handicap. So it was only obvious that she would want to wear something more fashionable as a woman.

As the girls were all working hard on their own things, there was one person who wasn't working on Nana's body. It was the only man in the room, Koutarou. Instead he was wearing an apron and preparing dinner on his own.

”Blue Knight, why are you not joining the others in their work?”

Alunaya who found that strange spoke to Koutarou through the crest on the back of his right hand. Koutarou stopped working on

the food and looked at his crest like one would look at their wrist watch.

“Alunaya-dono, though it might be mechanical, that is still a woman's body. Don't you think it would be rude of me as a man to join in?”

”I see. This is that thing isn’t it? Tact. My niece always gets angry at me over that.”

The impression of Alunaya cheerfully laughing was conveyed through the crest. When conversing through the crest, words were not needed. Koutarou was only speaking because he was unused to having a conversation in his head.

“Yes, that's right. We're intending to create a real body for Nana-san after all”

”Tact and obstinacy, huh? So that’s why you’re on dinner making duty.”

”This is important work that someone has to do.”

”That apron suits you well, surprisingly.”

“Ahaha, thank you, Alunaya-dono”

Taking part in Nana's medical checkup and creating her artificial limbs could be considered seeing her naked. With that in mind, she probably wouldn't want a man around, and so Koutarou voluntarily offered to work on chores. Moreover, Koutarou was sadly just a high school student. Unlike the girls, there wasn't much he could do for her.

“Okay, I'm going back to work now.”

”Yes, I’m sorry for interrupting.”

After their discussion ended, Koutarou adjusted the position of his apron and got back to work. Alunaya looked at him work through Shizuka's eyes. He then muttered to himself so that Koutarou couldn't hear.

"He's as overly serious as always."

That voice reached Shizuka whom he was living inside of. In response, Shizuka laughed partly for fun and partly out of amazement.

"You think so too, Uncle?"

"Yes."

"Girls don't mind if someone as considerate as that sees their body."

"Because he has tact, huh."

"Yeah. But Satomi-kun, stubbornly doesn't accept that. He goes on about rules or morality, he's so thickheaded..."

Shizuka smiled wryly and dropped her shoulders. There was hardly any difference between letting a doctor see your body and letting someone considerate see it. Yet Koutarou refused. There was a limit to how far you had to go to uphold the rules and going beyond that would only cause him to lose out. Shizuka was a little irritated at Koutarou who was just too awkward.

"He isn't unaccepting because it would break rules or morals."

"Eh?"

"He can't accept the very reality that the girl called Nana can't live a normal life. That's why he won't join in. The Blue Knight wants to believe that you girls are creating a real body."

Thanks to the crest where even feelings were transmitted, Alunaya had realized Koutarou's true intentions. Koutarou wasn't actually

too hung up on rules and morals, he simply couldn't accept that Nana was unfortunate. That's why the artificial limbs that the girls were creating had to be real. Koutarou had to treat it like a real woman's body. He believed that these artificial limbs would be able to give Nana a happy life.

“Why do boys live like that I wonder...”

Shizuka found herself instinctively sighing from Koutarou simply being too awkward and straight.

”Even though you say that, you seem happy, Shizuka.”

”Well, I am happy after all.”

However, after sighing, Shizuka was smiling as she reaffirmed how happy she was to have fallen for Koutarou. He was so awkward and could only walk straight forward, and Shizuka loved him for it.

“If I were to guess... is it because you wish to breed?”

“I have no intentions of that as of now!!”

However, because Alunaya's following words were far too tactless, Shizuka's bright emotions were swept away somewhere.

PART 3

While Koutarou's cooking couldn't compare to Kiriha's or Ruth's, everyone was grateful to be able to eat directly after finishing work. Because the recipes Koutarou had learned in the past Forthorthe were to be eaten during travel, much of the food was easy to eat during break periods.

Afterwards, Koutarou was mostly in charge of other chores so that the girls could work more easily. Since he didn't have any useful skills or womanly sensibilities, he believed it was better this way and he held dissatisfaction over his role. Moreover since this was something Ruth and the others normally did, he understood the meaning of it well.

However, there was one matter were Koutarou's opinion was requested.

“Koutarou, come over here.”

”What?”

When Theia called Koutarou over her put down his broom and quickly walked up to the girls.

“Are you hungry again? Or would you like some coffee?”

“No, it's not like that.”

Koutarou was sure this was another chore to do, but Theia shook her head. Instead, she pointed to the hologram floating in the air.

“We want your opinion on the combat system”

Theia and the others had called for Koutarou because they wanted his opinion on the design of the systems that moved the body.

Whenever there was battle, the girls all fought using their own power. However, Koutarou used science, spiritual energy and magic all at once. As a result, Nana would likely move similar to Koutarou once her body was complete. That's why his opinion on this matter was necessary.

“She won't need a combat system, right?”

While what Theia was saying was justifiable, Koutarou shook his head. Nana had fought enough, so expecting her to fight even more was cruel. Koutarou believed that a combat system was unnecessary for Nana's new body.

“I think so too, but Darkness Rainbow might not see it that way.”

Theia looked down with a sad expression. She felt the same way Koutarou did, that Nana should only need to chase after happiness. However, if Darkness Rainbow learns that Nana has recovered, there was a high chance they might attack. They would inevitably believe that she would have the power to fight. The circumstances would change from now, where she was visibly handicapped.

“...So they won't leave her be...”

”Satomi-kun, this might sound strange coming from me, but... defeating Darkness Rainbow is the fastest way to keep Nana, no, Nana-san from fighting. But until then, I believe she needs a means to protect herself.”

Maki, the former Dark Navy, backed up Theia's opinion. Having been a leader of Darkness Rainbow, her words were convincing. As a result, Koutarou reluctantly accepted their opinion.

“Okay, so what do you want to know?”

“First off all, since her body will be strengthened by spiritual energy, in the case that she moves faster than the maneuver suit—”

Koutarou joined in with the girls and began discussing about Nana's body. If possible he wanted to stay out of talking about a

woman's body, but since this was regarding combat, and on the software side of things, he didn't feel that much resistance to it.

PART 4

When Koutarou joined in, some others stepped out. They were Nana herself and Yurika. With Nana's medical checkup and data collection over, Yurika wanted to bring her to a different room. Yurika wanted Nana to get some rest since she had been getting a medical check up since morning, but Koutarou and the others were in the middle of a discussion in this room, so she decided on going to a different room.

“Nana-san, let's go!”

”Yurika-chan, it's dangerous to go that fast”

“It's okay!”

Yurika pushed the movable bed that Nana was lying on and ran towards the Blue Knight's hallway. Yurika was weak, but the bed was floating on the air thanks to the Blue Knight's power, so it was possible for her to run at full speed despite pushing.

“Last time I tried with luggage it stopped on its own before hitting a wall.”

”So you've already crashed. Fufufu.”

“I didn't crash. It stopped on its own after all.”

”Fufufu, you're right.”

It would have been normal for a handicapped person to feel fear when being treated this carelessly, but former magical girl of Rainbow Heart, Nana show no signs of such fear as she happily smiled.

“Take that! High speed cornering!”

“Kya Kya!!”

The two were making quite a fuss as Yurika ran, but they safely reached their destination, the cabin. By the way, the reason why Yurika didn't hesitate or got lost wasn't because she knew the layout of the Blue Knight, but rather because there were lights on the floor guiding her.

“This is Nana-san's room.”

“It's awfully big.”

Yurika had taken Nana to one of the guest cabins reserved for visitors. Since this was for special visitors, it was very big room with a substantial amount of furniture.

“Theia-chan is rich after all.”

”...I don't think this is on the level of rich...”

Nana could tell at first glance that this was an abnormally luxurious room and was quite surprised by that, but Yurika on the other hand showed no signs of being intimidated by the luxurious Forthorthe-style furniture and boldly entered the room as she pushed Nana. Meanwhile Nana felt like her heart would stop every time Yurika almost ran into the expensive looking furniture.

Does Yurika-chan really get it...?

Nana wondered if Yurika was being so bold because she was so close to Theia or if it was because their culture was so different that she didn't understand the value of the items. Though Nana feared that it was the latter.

“Okay, let's move over to this bed, Nana-san.”

”...Okay...”

Yurika brought Nana all the way to the bed in the back of the room and urged her to switch over with a smile. Nana wondered just how much that bed was worth as she slowly moved over from bed to bed. The movable bed automatically adjusted its height to the bed in the room, making it easier for Nana to move.

“Good work, Nana-san.”

Yurika smiled as Nana laid down and pulled a blanket over her.

Nana-san was still small...

Having met for the first time in a while, Nana looked very small to Yurika. It was less because of her size and more because of her weak impression caused by her dull movements. The moment she noticed that, Yurika's smiled turned sadder.

“...You can take the rest of the day easy. It looks like there will be more analyzing and measuring, but they're scheduled for tomorrow onwards...”

However, Yurika didn't want Nana to notice that and tried to retain her normal smile. Her efforts paid off as she remained sad for a few days.

“Yurika-chan, there's no need for you to be sad.”

However, Nana had known Yurika for long. She didn't overlook the sad smile that had shown on Yurika's face for mere moments.

“Nana-san...”

Yurika's eyes shot wide open in surprise. However, she soon recalled that she had never been good at hiding secrets from Nana. She was her master and her precious best friend. If Nana had been healthy, Yurika would have picked her during last year's scavenger hunt.

“...But... Nana-san, because of me, you...”

Yurika bit her lip.

That was something that happened over a year ago. Yurika was captured by Darkness Rainbow and used as a hostage against Nana. With Yurika as a hostage, Nana was in great danger as she couldn't put up any resistance. In order to escape from that situation, Nana caused the magical power inside of her to run rampant to blow herself up. Darkness Rainbow didn't expect Nana going so far for Yurika's sake and took the brunt of the attack.

Fortunately, Nana and Yurika were able to return alive, but the price to pay was far too big. Nana lost several parts of her body, and even with those parts replaced with magical limbs, she still lived an uncomfortable life. On top of that, she lost her ability to accumulate

magical power and use magic. In order to save Yurika's life, Nana had given up her ability to fight and her ability to use magic.

“That wasn't because of you. It's Darkness Rainbow's fault for using a hostage. It's nothing for you to worry about.”

Even though she had lost her ability to freely move her body and use magic, Nana was still a magical girl at heart, and there was nothing more important to her than the life of her friend. That's why Nana didn't regret anything and had no intention of blaming Yurika.

“Nana-san is right, Yurika.”

That was when someone who supported Nana entered the room.

“If anything, Nana-san should be blaming me.”

“Maki-chan...”

Maki entered the room. She wanted to speak with Nana, and since it was something difficult to talk about in front of Koutarou and the girls of room 106, she had been waiting for her chance.

“Yurika, it was us Darkness Rainbow that captured you. We were the ones that used you to corner Nana-san. That's why I'm the one that should be sad and apologizing.”

When Nana blew herself up, Maki had been there as a member of Darkness Rainbow. Since she had been some distance away from Nana the explosion hadn't caused that much damage to her, but even then she hadn't suffered light wounds. Taking her injured companions with her to escape was the best she could do.

“Nana-san.”

Maki stood next to Yurika and looked at Nana lying down. Deep sadness and regret filled her eyes. It was as if Yurika's feelings from moments ago moved over to Maki.

“I'm sorry for doing such terrible things. Darkness Rainbow was... no, the me back then didn't know what I wanted. That's why I eliminated everything I didn't like as a paradoxically attempt to obtain everything I wanted.”

What Maki truly wanted was love, but she was unaware of that herself and used the power of magic to manipulate minds in an attempt to forcibly make lies and betrayal useless. If she eliminated everything she found displeasing, she should be able to reach her desired outcome. Having lost sight of what she truly wanted, Maki let her feelings run amok and devoted herself to her short sighted idea.

“I got you two involved because of my own self-centered feelings.”

That had been the reason as to why Maki had been misusing magic, and the other six leaders of Darkness Rainbow should more or less have similar feelings running amok. As a result, that lead to violence, causing them to become hostile towards Nana and Rainbow Heart. Which in the end caused Nana to receive a wound that wouldn't heal.

“I know this isn't something that could be forgiven just by apologizing, but I wanted to properly say I'm sorry. I am so very sorry, Nana-san.”

Meeting with Koutarou and the others, Maki realized that she sought after love. That had been why she used magic to eliminate

lies and betrayal. However, that would only ever breed fear and rejection. The current Maki understood that, which was why she knew that she had to treasure the love that appeared in front of her. Thanks to that, Maki understood her own mistakes and sin, and was able to confront it. One could say that the handicapped Nana was the very symbol of Maki's sin. Maki was currently facing that straight on.

“Navy... no, Maki-san. I forgive you.”

Nana forgave Maki. Without making a single grudgeful remark, in fact she seemed truly happy as she smiled.

“Nana-san...”

Maki was dumbfounded by Nana's smile. Since Nana had become handicapped because of her and the others of Darkness Rainbow, Maki suspected that Nana must at least have some negative feelings towards her, but Nana was smiling and Maki couldn't understand why.

“I was the magician of love and courage. While I might hate the sin, I won't hate the person. Love forgives all... I consider myself Rainbow Nana even now.”

Nana took pride in having been an arc wizard of Rainbow Heart and what she had done. Even now that she had retired from duty, her feelings hadn't changed whatsoever. Nana didn't regret having become handicapped in the slightest, because it had been necessary for Rainbow Nana.

“That's right, Maki-chan. You being here is proof that Nana-san was right.”

”Yurika...”

The end result of that was that Yurika was brought to Koutarou and Maki was saved from Darkness Rainbow, or possibly from loneliness itself. Looking at just that point, Nana was convinced that her decision was correct like Yurika had said. Nana was still Rainbow Nana even now. Her body didn't move like she wanted but love and courage was still within her.

“...Nana-san”

“Yes?”

”I feel like I finally understand the reason why I could never beat you or Yurika.”

”Now that you do, I'm sure you could win against me or Yurika-chan.”

“...That might be true...”

Maki wiped at the corner of her eyes and finally showed a smile. Yurika and Nana watching over her, showed smiles as well. They all knew that Nana had been right. Anger and hate was unnecessary for them. Even more so now that Nana's body was being healed.

“Nana-san, Yurika... thank you, for forgiving me...”

Maki had walked down the wrong path in life, but she had safely been able to change ways.

PART 5

As the atmosphere in the room grew more quiet, one more visitor appeared.

“Nana-chan!”

The person who appeared was Sanae's mother, Kanae. She jumped into the room and ran up to the bed. Since Kanae was Nana's old friend, tears filled her eyes when she saw her lying on the bed.

“Kanae-san!? Why are you here!?”

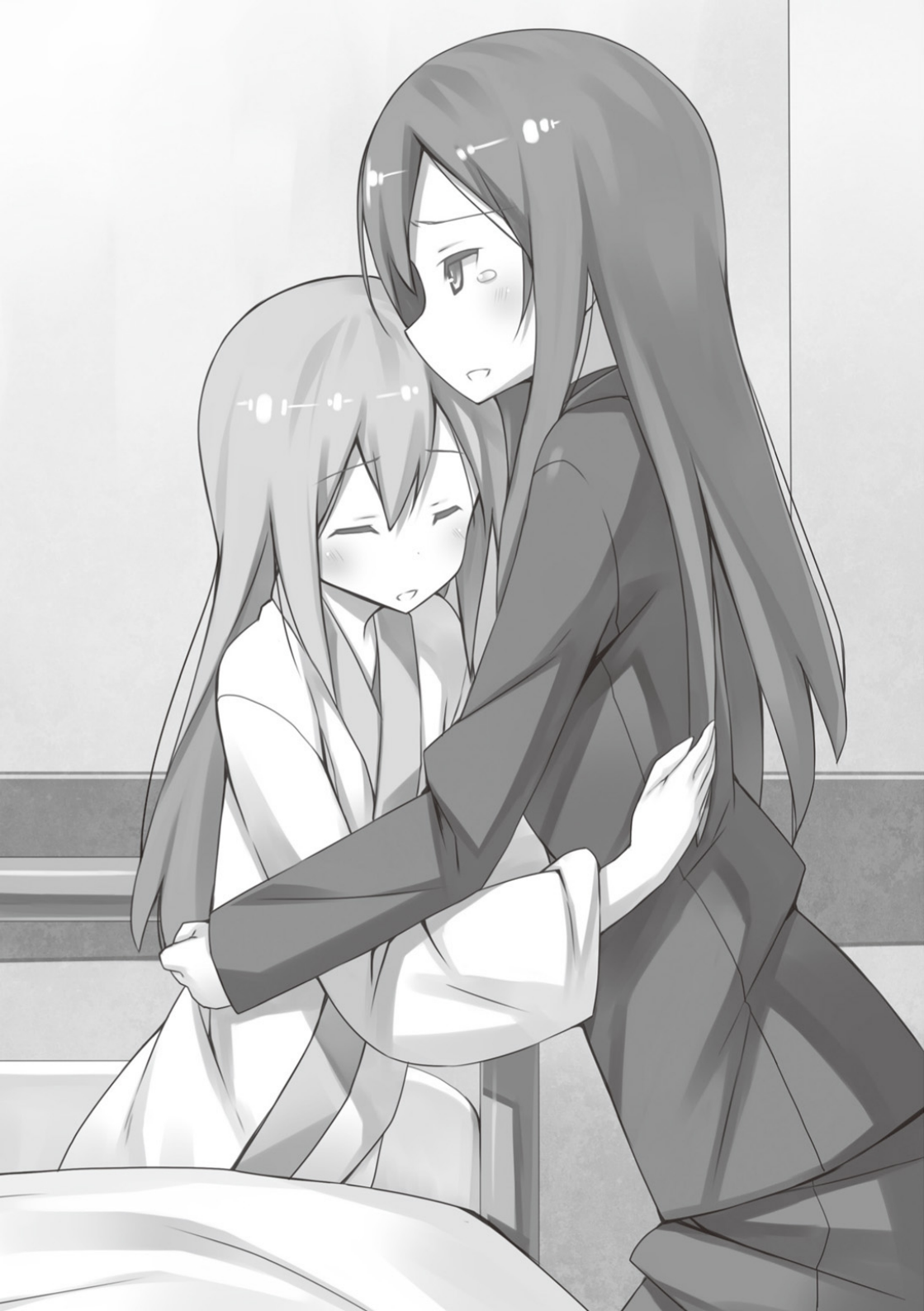
Nana who had always been smiling up until now, showed a shocked expression. She hadn't imagined that Kanae would show up here.

“I heard from my daughter that you were here and came running!”

Kanae seemingly thrust the others aside as she came up to the bedside, grabbing a hold of Nana's small hand. Kanae hadn't spent that much time together with Nana, but to her, Nana was not only a friend, but also like a sister or daughter to her. Having met Nana for the first time in a long while, Kanae was more excited than usual and that was the reason for the normally strict on manners mother had thrust aside Yurika and the others.

“What's with you, if you got hurt and had to retired you should have said so! You made me worry so much for nothing!”

The biggest problem Kanae had was that ever since Nana had vanished, she had never heard anything more from Nana. As a result, Kanae was worried that Nana might have died in battle.



“T-That's because if I carelessly contacted you then Darkness Rainbow would—”

Nana's previous confident attitude seemed like a dream as she was incoherent. Just like Kanae treasured Nana; Nana also treasured Kanae. Kanae had the power to return Nana to a normal girl. That was just how strong their bond was.

“Quiet you! What are you so scared of Darkness Rainbow for!”

“But, it's dange—”

“I'm much more worried if you are okay or not! You really are stupid!”

Kanae pulled on Nana's hand to draw her closer before hugging her. That was the kind of person Nana was to Kanae. Even though more than ten years had passed, those feelings remained the same.

“Kanae-san...”

“You have something to say don't you?”

”I-I'm sorry.”

”Wrong!”

“Ah... uhm, I-I'm back...”

After thinking for a moment, Nana whispered with reservation. At the same time she hugged Kanae back with her real right hand. As if responding to that, Kanae strengthened her embrace on Nana.

“...Welcome back, Nana-chan. I'm so glad you're okay...”

While they had only been together for a short time, Nana was someone special to Kanae and they had shared joys and sorrows. Now that she had returned, Kanae was unable to keep her tears from overflowing.

PART 6

“Yurika-chan, you didn't tell Kanae-san that I was okay?”

“I did tell her. That you had been seriously injured and that I took over your role.”

“If you put it like that it makes it sound like she's died or is on the verge of death!!”

Nana, Yurika and Kanae continued chatting on for a while. Maki watched over them for a while before realizing that she was better off not being here. While she had been forgiven, she had once been their enemy. There were certainly things they couldn't talk about in front of Maki. That's why she slowly distanced herself from the bed without letting the others realize it and headed towards the exit of the cabin.

“Kanae-san you worry too much.”

”At least explain it properly before you tell me that!”

“Now, now, Kanae-san, calm down...”

Fortunately, none of the three noticed Maki leaving the cabin as they cheerfully continued talking. Maki took one last look at their happy smiles before quietly leaving the room.

After entering the passage, Maki leaned against the wall and lost herself in thought.

Old friends, huh...

Darkness Rainbow was an organization that lacked bonds, instead they use each other. Because of that, there was nothing like friendship between the members. However, there was one person that Maki could call a friend.

I wonder if Crimson is worrying about me...

That was Dark Crimson. She was the simplest of the members in Darkness Rainbow, and being strong was her only desire. Her simplistic way of thinking and desire matched well with Maki's hate for lies and betrayal and the two respected one another. Not even Maki knew if that was even enough to call her a friend. However, she vaguely hoped that she could. At the same time, she felt sorry if she was making Crimson worry.

No... I might be having thinking about this too conveniently...

Crimson was a member of Darkness Rainbow. She wouldn't give up her way of life like Maki.

There's no friends that would worry about—

And just as Maki was muttering something sad to herself—

"Ei!"

—she was suddenly attacked by someone.

"Haryah!?"

Her arm was grabbed and twisted upwards, a simple joint lock. Maki was a trained soldier, so normally she would notice it before she was approached. She was an indigo magician that could manipulate minds. However, the person that had performed the joint lock had so little hostility within them that they had easily slipped through Maki's caution.

“How about it, do you give up!?”

”K-Kasagi-san!?”

Upon hearing that voice, Maki realized it belonged to Shizuka. She also realized that she hadn't noticed Shizuka not just because there was no hostility within her, but because she was also a martial arts expert. If a master without hostility killed their presence and closed in, there was nothing she could do.

“What's with that dark expression~ take that, and that~”

“Ow, ow ow ow”

Shizuka seemed strangely happy as she twisted Maki. However, since she had no intention of actually hurting Maki, she restrained herself so that Maki only felt some pain.

“W-What are you doing!?”

”I can't try out some moves without a reason?”

“N-Not normally, no!”

“Then it's probably because we're not normal.”

“Ah...”

Not normal. Hearing those words, Maki understood what Shizuka was doing. Shizuka had worried for Maki and had come to take a look at her. She had noticed Maki leaving the group with a brooding expression. There was only one reason why Maki would do that, which was why Shizuka could easily find her and put her in joint lock.

“Cheer up, Aika-san! No matter what you're worrying about, we're with you!”

”Kasagi-san... no, I'm fine now.”

“...Really?”

“Yes. How should I say this... when I'm like this, I feel embarrassed over my short-sightedness.”

There were no friends that would worry about her. That was how Maki thought as she only thought about her past in Darkness Rainbow. But the truth was different. Maki had many friends, and in fact, Shizuka had come here, worried for her. There was no need for her to feel envious of Yurika and the others.

“Then that's good... Eii!”

“Ow ow ow, w-why!? A-Aren't you done!?”

”This is more about a martial artist's curiosity now. I was wondering how you will escape this, Aika-san.”

”Then let me live up to your expectations!”

A smile returned to Maki's face as she counter attacked Shizuka. Having received a lot of training as a soldier, she had several ways

to break free from a joint lock. As she attempted her counter attack on Shizuka, she thought to herself.

I think might have liked being able to do this kind of thing with Crimson

Maki thought of former ally who was now far away. If fate had let them travel down a different path, she might have been able to smile together with her like this. When she thought of it like that, Maki felt just a little sadder.

PART 1

Monday, September 13

Nana's new body was something that would be completed in a day or two. Koutarou and the others lived their normal lives as they gradually built her body. Since the discussion regarding the combat system was done, Koutarou returned to doing chores. Right now he was out buying food for today's dinner. Normally Kiriha, Ruth, Harumi or Shizuka most often went out to buy ingredients in a group that varied, but they were currently busy so only one of them went out with Koutarou. She was holding Koutarou's arm and quietly drew close to him.

“Hello, Kiriha-san”

“Hello, Obaa-san”

“Kiriha-san, we just stocked up on some new tea leaves. You can take some with you for free if you give me your impression after you've tried it”

“Thank you very much”

“Oh, Kiriha-chan, out on a date with your boyfriend today?”

Kiriha got along well with the people in the shopping district. Just from walking down the street all kinds of people called out to them; it varied from greetings to consultations to banter. Just listening to them, Koutarou could tell how well Kiriha and the people in the shopping district got along.

Her invasion is progressing smoothly. Good...

This was proof of how well Kiriha's invasion was going. It was a peaceful invasion where in the end everyone would hold hands and respect one another. Koutarou still didn't know if it could be called an invasion, but he was happy that it was proceeding smoothly. That's why he smiled as Kiriha spoke to the people of the city.

“Yes, we're on a date!”

”H-Hey!?”

However, Kiriha's bold remark blew away Koutarou's joyous emotions. Because he had spoken with his father and Kenji, Koutarou had started getting more conscious of the girls of room 106. As a result, he was somewhat shaken up when Kiriha declared that they were on a date.

“That's an awfully normal boy you picked for yourself, Kiriha-chan”

”I think normalness is important in the end. Besides, our memories are special”

”Well said... Gaaah, it's great to be young! Damn, good for you, kid!”

”Y-Yes”

“What are you saying!?”

”Ah, no, I didn't mean it that way!!”

The owner of the grocer's shop that was talking to Koutarou and Kiriha was caught by his wife and scolded. As a result, Koutarou and Kiriha were back to just the two of them again.

“Fufu, as I thought, being like this makes it look like we're on a date”

Kiriha glanced back towards the grocer's shop and smiled as she embraced Koutarou's arm again and moved closer. As she did, the smell of flowers tickled Koutarou's nose. It was most likely the smell of the shampoo or perfume that Kiriha was using, but Koutarou couldn't make a distinction between them. However, the faint smell wasn't overwhelming, and served to strengthen Kiriha's calming impression.

“We're only out to buy food for dinner”

”But it's still a splendid date. A man and a woman in such a relationship, or on their way to such a relationship, spending time together like this is called a date”

Kiriha smiled as she spoke and strengthened her grip around Koutarou's arm. To her, whenever she was with Koutarou she was always in the middle of a date.

“Of course, it would be a different story if you didn't hold any romantic feelings towards me”

But when Kiriha said that she wasn't smiling. Koutarou not having any romantic feelings for her was Kiriha's only fear.

“So much has happened between us, I've seen your good and bad sides and we've supported each other several times... with all that, there's no way I don't feel anything for you”

Since Kiriha looked so lonely, Koutarou honestly spoke his mind. The memories they had built up this year and a half were plentiful. Amongst them were many things that could let them progress towards a romantic relationship. That's why it would be a lie if Koutarou were to say he felt nothing for Kiriha.

“Then a date is an apt description”

A smile returned to Kiriha's lips and she looked up at Koutarou, pressing her body even closer towards him. She was so close that if she stretched her back a little further their lips would touch.

“...Feelings aside, would buying ingredients for dinner even count as that?”

Koutarou was happy to see Kiriha smile again, but he was too embarrassed that this was a date, being a boy in puberty after all. He couldn't help but let a wry comment leak past his lips.

“Then let's treat this as mischievousness”

Kiriha hugged Koutarou from the front. In the end Kiriha was one step above Koutarou. If it wasn't a date, then it was mischievousness. If it was something that only lovers could do, then it could still be forgiven if it was simply Kiriha being mischievous.

“I'm sorry for always troubling you”

Kiriha looked up at Koutarou from point blank range. Her eyes were moist and the reflection of Koutarou in them was wavering. It was quite clear that this was not her being mischievous.

“Geez... people like you could be called imps”

”Why?”

”Because you're only saying that because you know it's not bothering me”

Just a few months ago, Koutarou probably would have been troubled by Kiriha's actions. However, after speaking with Yuuichirou and Kenji, Koutarou had reached the conclusion that he needed Kiriha and the others. And that realization allowed Koutarou to understand Kiriha's intentions more deeply.

“The truth is, I'm actually hoping you will counterattack”

If Koutarou were to do anything at this point, he could blame it on Kiriha's mischievousness provoking him. Letting him shift all of the blame of whatever happened onto her. In other words, this wasn't some normal mischievousness, but rather a free pass in the disguise of mischievousness.

“...If you live like that you'll lose out”

Knowing that, Koutarou couldn't take any thoughtless actions. He placed his hands on Kiriha's shoulders and pushed her back a little. Since he treasured her, this kind of action was necessary. If he was swept away by the feelings on the surface, he would lose sight of what he really needed to treasure.

“Fufu, you haven't noticed, have you, Koutarou?”

Despite being rejected, Kiriha smiled happily, as if she had wanted Koutarou to do this.

“Notice what?”

”That you treasure us more than a normal boyfriend treasures his girlfriend”

Though Kiriha hadn't expected this action, it proved to surpass her expectations.

This action proved that once Koutarou made something fit for a lover, he would take responsibility himself. Moreover, not doing anything thoughtless to Kiriha despite them being so intimate was practically the same as saying that he truly loved her.

“What you aren't doing for us is clearly defining yourself as our lover or any direct expressions of love. You do everything other than that. Even more than a normal lover would”

”Eh...”

Koutarou found all nine girls important to him. That's why he wanted them to be happy and wouldn't hesitate to make it happen. He had reason enough to put his life on the line for them and he wouldn't hesitate to do so. The same could be said for the girls. In other words, Koutarou and the girls felt for each other, trusted each other and supported each other. If anyone was in danger the others wouldn't hesitate to offer their lives. Koutarou and the others relationship had already surpassed that of friendship and was reaching the level of family.

Becoming lovers or marrying could be said as welcoming strangers into your life as family. However, Koutarou had already done something similar with the girls. While he was protecting the pretext that they were now lovers, the distance between him and the girls was surprisingly short.

The question was if even lovers were this close. Kiriha didn't believe they were.

“Your hands tells me everything. Just why did these hands push me away? Because you hate me?”

“That's...”

Koutarou couldn't refute Kiriha. If they had just been friends, he could have followed the flow and taken action. She had prepared the free pass by the name of mischievousness for that reason. However, since he treasured her, he couldn't. He didn't want to push such an unfortunate role onto her.

“That's why I won't lose out even if I live like this. The reason for that is because you are so considerate of me”

Kiriha said and smiled. A deep sense of love and trust gleamed in her eyes. She believed that she would absolutely find happiness as long as she was with Koutarou.

“...I lose, Kiriha. Geez...”

Koutarou raised the white flag. Listening to her words, he started feeling like he wanted to live up to her expectation and trust.

“Then... you admit that this is a date?”

”Yeah, unwillingly”

“Unwillingly, huh. Fufufufu...”

“...”

Kiriha knew that Koutarou calling it unwilling was something his pride as a man made him say, but she didn't push it further. She believed a good woman was someone who let a man save face.

PART 2

Koutarou and Kiriha bought ingredients for today's dinners for a while. Kiriha had called it a date, and the two were certainly intimate enough to make everyone looking believe just that.

“Koutarou”

”Hm?”

”Do you prefer a normal apron or a kappōgi[1]?”

”Why would you ask that all of a sudden?”

“I wanted to know which one you'd like me to wear”

”Doesn't it depend on what you're making? An apron for European food and a kappōgi for Japanese food”

“I didn't mean it like that. When you come home to room 106, which one would you like me to welcome you home in”

“Hey...”

“Just tell me”

”...A-An apron, I guess”

“Why?”

“An apron has a more active impression”

[1] A gown-like apron originating from Japan

“You mean I look like a tomboy?”

”That's what I mean”

The People of the Earth's problem with the radical faction had been resolved and their peaceful invasion of the surface was gradually progressing. As a result, the workload on the commander, Kiriha, was greatly decreasing giving her more time to act like a normal girl. You could say that Kii, who had been bottled up, was being set free. As a result, while Kiriha still remained calm and dignified, she would sometimes unleash her cute and energetic side like a surprise attack.

“Fufufu, you mean you're not forgetting about Kii”

”That's...”

“...It's not?”

“...You're not wrong, but...”

”Fufufu. I love you, Onii-chan”

“H-Hey... everyone is looking”

”It's fine!”

Koutarou found himself attracted to that new side – more precisely it was her original side – of Kiriha's. He wanted to see this part of her as well. Just like how he didn't want to see Yurika as a magical girl, he didn't want to see Kiriha as a commander.

“Now that I think about it, Kii-chan had likes and dislikes, but... has Kiriha-san's dislikes gone away? Like green pepper”

“Actually, I still don't like them, but I endure and eat them”

“You can be pretty enduring after all... You don't have to eat it when it's just the two of us”

”Fufu, how reassuring”

The two's final stop was the greengrocer. Since vegetables for nine people was heavy, they always saved it for last. As they entered, the store keeper greeted them with an energetic voice.

“Welcome! Thanks for your patronage as always, Kiriha-chan!”

“Thank you for always adding in a little extra too”

Like with the other shops on the shopping district, the owners of this one was familiar with Kiriha as well. Kiriha preferred to use this shop for vegetables over the super market. The vegetables here were far superior to the super market in terms of freshness and taste.

“So what did you come to buy today?”

”Green pepper, eggplants and onions. I was thinking of stuffing them with meat. So I also want some vegetables to use as salad. Let me know if you have any recommendations”

Kiriha let the shopkeep know her wishes and held Koutarou's hand so that the shopkeep couldn't see. Since Koutarou knew that she was continuing the topic that they had been on a moment ago, and smiled as he squeezed her hand back.

“I've got some good radish sprouts and lettuce in today”

”Then I'll have those”

“Good. Then it's green pepper, eggplants, onions, radish sprouts and lettuce”

The greengrocer filled a plastic bag with the vegetables Kiriha was after, however he stopped in the middle of it.

“That's right, Kiriha-chan”

”Yes?”

“If you see my daughter on your way back, would you let her know to hurry on home?”

The greengrocer had a daughter. Kiriha had gotten familiar with her through her volunteer work at the hero show. When she spotted Kiriha she would flash a brilliant smile and run up to her. However, that energeticness could be problematic as well, as the sun was already starting to set, but she hadn't come home yet.

“I understand. I'll let her know if I see her”

”Thank you, Kiriha-chan”

”No... I should be the one thanking you”

The greengrocer gave his thanks as he handed over the plastic bag. It didn't just contain the requested vegetables but also a bunch of extras. Kiriha gratefully accepted the bag and politely thanked the greengrocer back before she and Koutarou left for home.

PART 3

In room 106, Kiriha wasn't the only one who disliked green pepper, but also Sanae and Yurika.

“Koutarou, if you love me then eat my green pepper for me!”

”Fine”

“Aaaah, no, that's not what I meant! Let go! The taste is transferring over! Noooooooooo!!”

”Have these too”

“Y-Yurika, y-you! Gueeeh, i-in that case, you're going down with me!”

”Huh?”

“Eat even more, Koutarou!”

”Hm!”

”Kyaaaaa! M-My mouth is being filled with the taste of green pepper!”

The moment they realized that today's dinner was green pepper stuffed with meat, Sanae and Yurika both decided to only eat the meat and leave the green pepper to Koutarou. However, their plan failed right away as Koutarou caught Sanae and forcibly transmitted the taste of green pepper to her through spiritual energy. Yurika was then promptly caught by Sanae and forced to share senses.

“What are those two doing...?”

Dumbfounded by Sanae and Yurika writhing in agony, Theia ate her meat stuffed green pepper. The Mastir territory that Theia came from was rich in farm produce, amongst them were pungent vegetables or those she disliked, but she had gotten used to that. Green pepper was nothing to her.

“If I were to guess, if we leave behind our green pepper, Master would catch us and force us to eat it”

Ruth cheerfully looked at the three. Koutarou's, Yurika's and Sanae's rioting looked fun to her, and at the same time she felt a little envious.

“...Bertorion would force us if we leave the green pepper behind, huh”

Clan gazed at the meat stuffed green pepper on her plate after hearing what Ruth said, and she began pondering if she should separate the meat and only eat that or not. Noticing Clan's behavior, Harumi called out to her.

“Clan-san, why don't we try leaving our green pepper as well?”

“I-I can't do something as shameless as that! It's a breach of manners!”

Embarrassed at having her feelings seen through, Clan hurriedly threw her stuffed meat into her mouth. Harumi suspected that was a breach of manners as well, but since Clan was showing such a cute reaction, she chose not to point it out.

“Aika-san, say aah”

“What now, all of a sudden?”

Maki was surprised when Shizuka suddenly thrust the stuffed meat in front of her. She wasn't following Shizuka's intentions.

“I was getting a little jealous of Satomi-kun and the others so I wanted to try out something similar”

”Ah... so that's what you mean”

When Shizuka explained herself, Maki finally understood. She also wanted to join in Koutarou's and the others ridiculous conversation.

“So, say aah”

“Aah”

Maki opened her mouth according to Shizuka's request. As she did, Shizuka pushed the stuffed meat inside. Even though the taste shouldn't change, Maki felt it tasted it better. This was the first time she understood that feelings affected the taste of the food.

“Everyone, that's no good Ho-!”

“We have no likes or dislikes Ho-!”

“I'm sure everyone would be more surprised that you eat at all”

”Nothing is impossible for a haniwa Ho-!”

“Fufu, that's right, you're— Hm?”

Kiriha spoke with the haniwas as she ate, but her cellphone vibrated in the middle of it. Kiriha pulled out her vibrating cellphone and

saw the name of the greengrocer she had visited earlier in the day displayed on the screen.

What could he want at this hour?

If she had forgotten something he would have called right away, or he could have given it to her the last time she met. The same was true for change. There was also no meaning to discuss volunteer work during dinner either. Still wondering what it could be about, Kiriha got up from her seat and headed towards the kitchen as she picked up the call.

“Hello”

”Is that you, Kiriha-chan!?”

The familiar voice of the greengrocer came from the speaker. The voice was for some reason in a rush, and Kiriha was starting to get a bad feeling about this.

“Yes, what is the matter?”

“Actually, my daughter still hasn't come back!! You haven't seen her have you!?”

“What!?”

The time was already past 8PM. Yet the young girl who hadn't even begun grade school yet still hadn't come home. One couldn't help but think that the girl had gotten caught up in some incident or accident. Sadly, Kiriha's bad premonition had struck true.

PART 4

The greengrocer's daughter was called Youko, six years old, and would graduate from kindergarten this year and start grade school next year. As she started to get a grip of things, she started going out to play on her own more often. This was also partially because her parents were busy with the greengrocery.

Of course, her parents had made her promise to be extra careful around cars, not to talk to strangers and to come home before the sun went down. Until now, Youko had never broken her promise. She was a clever girl and knew nothing good would come from breaking these promises.

Yet she hadn't come home after the sun had set. That was when her father called Kiriha. Since her parents felt sorry for leaving Youko alone often because they were busy with the shop, they were in a real hurry.

"...And that's the situation. Since I'm worried I'll go look for her"

After finishing up her phone call, Kiriha explained the situation to Koutarou and the others. Once she was done with that, she would go look for Youko. As expected, upon hearing that an acquaintance's kindergartner hadn't come back after the sun had set, Kiriha couldn't just leave it be. She knew how lonely it got, walking around alone at night.

"I'll go too"

Hearing that Kiriha would be looking for Youko, Koutarou hurriedly stood up. He was going to go look too. He had also met with Youko after the hero show, so he knew what she looked like. He should be able to help Kiriha. Moreover, no matter how strong

Kiriha was, he was reluctant to let her walk around the city alone at night.

“I will go as well”

Following Koutarou, Sanae also stood up. In her case, she wasn't just worried, but she also wanted to stick to Koutarou.

“Sanae, did you know how You-chan looked?”

“I don't, but I only need to find someone with a similar aura as the greengrocer right?”

“I see, please do”

”Very good! Leave it to me!”

Since Sanae could use spiritual powers, she was better than anyone else when it came to looking for people. Even if she didn't know how Youko looked, she was probably more likely to find her than Koutarou was. That's why Sanae was full of confidence as she stood up. Following Sanae, the other girls stood up one after another.

“Kiriha, Koutarou, I will come too!”

“I will help too”

“Pardomshiha, we're sending out unmanned scouts”

”Yes, Clan-san. Right away”

Hearing that a small girl was missing, nobody in the room could just sit around. They all agreed that they should find her as soon as possible.

“Thank you, everyone”

Kiriha politely bowed. Unlike Koutarou and Kiriha, the other girls had no direct relationship with Youko. So having them offer their cooperation was very welcome.

“You don't have to mention it, Kiriha-san”

”Yeah, Sakuraba-senpai is right! Right, Aika-san?”

”Yes. If we all search for her we should be able to find her sooner”

In the end, all of the residents of room 106 decided to look for Youko. However, as they headed towards the door, Koutarou remembered something important.

“Yurika”

“Yhes, What ihs iht?”

When Koutarou called for her, she separated herself from the other girls. Her cheeks were stuffed full of food.

“You don't have to come”

“Eeeeehhh!?”

However, when those words came out of Koutarou's mouth, she hurriedly swallowed her food and began protesting.

“Why are you bullying me even at a time like thiiis!?”

Yurika was on the verge of tears. Just as she was going to work for the sake love and courage, Koutarou had cruelly rejected her.

“No, that's not what I meant”

However, sensing that she was about to burst into tears, Koutarou hurriedly shook his head.

“Then what do you mean?”

Even though Koutarou was saying that he wasn't doing this out of maliciousness, Yurika wasn't readily believing him. She stared at him with a suspecting look in her eyes.

“Maybe he's not being a bully, but he's just stating the truth that you won't be of any use?”

Theia put a finger up in front of her face and exclaimed.

“Is that whyyy!?”

“Theia, don't make this complicated!”

”That wasn't it?”

“While she might be useless, this time there's something else”

“So I really am useless!!”

“Could you guys shut up and listen!”

Koutarou loudly scolded the group that was starting to get noisy and explained why he had said that Yurika didn't need to come.

“Yurika, you stay with Nana. She hasn't gotten food yet, and there's other stuff you need to do right?”

”Ah!”

Koutarou had told Yurika to stay behind because someone was needed to take care of Nana onboard the Blue Knight.

Nana was currently handicapped and unable to move as she pleased. There were many things which she needed the help of others, such as changing clothes and taking a bath. And if she needed help, the most preferable one would be Yurika, whom she got along with the best. That's why Koutarou had told her that she didn't need to come. It wasn't like he was being mean to her.

“T-That's right. I completely forgot about Nana-san”

”What are you doing forgetting your master?”

“He, hehe, ehehehe”

Yurika laughed with an embarrassed expression. With her brain capacity being low, Yurika had forgotten about Nana once she got distracted with the kindergartner searching. Normally this could be called cold-hearted, but when comparing her master who was on the path to getting better, and Youko who was missing, there was a big difference in importance, and calling her cold-hearted was going too far.

PART 5

In the end, Koutarou and the eight girls, excluding Yurika, headed out to look for Youko. The problem was that many didn't know what she looked like, but this was resolved by having the haniwas display their memories. Yurika would stay behind to take care of Nana and pass messages along. If anyone told Yurika about something important, she would be letting the others know.

Koutarou was moving in a group with Sanae and Harumi. Though their reasons were different, they couldn't go on their own, so they went with Koutarou who was the most reliable.

“Satomi-kun, I've drawn up the directions everyone's headed towards”

While Harumi couldn't go on her own due to her weak constitution, she served as the brain of the group. Because she was calm and thoughtful, she could follow up on Koutarou and Sanae who was on the more lacking side of brain power.

“With the shopping district as the center, Theia-san and Ruth-san are going north, Kasagi-san and Aika-san are going south and Kiriha-san and Clan-san are going west”

Harumi had drawn a rough map and the directions everyone had headed in on her notebook. Names and portraits were drawn in giving them a comprehensible understanding of everyone's position.

“So we should go east”

Koutarou smiled for a moment as he looked at Harumi's cute handwriting and portraits, but he quickly pulled himself together. He had to find a missing kindergartner so there was no time to smile.

“Yes, but having members that can use magic on the east and south is a little bit grouped up, so I think we should circle up north”

”I see, that's a good idea”

They hadn't put much thought into it when they formed groups as they were just looking for a missing person, but looking at the groups closely there was a bit of bias in abilities. That was made more easily comprehensible when drawn up. Because of that, Koutarou believed it would be better to do as Harumi said.

“Fufufu, there's no need to worry!”

Sanae couldn't be one her own because of her personality. Since nobody could tell what she'd do on her own, she was placed with Koutarou for the sake of safety. Of course, Sanae herself wanted to be with Koutarou too.

“I'll find You-chan right away!”

”You sound full of confidence”

”This kind of moment is where psychic beauty Sanae-chan shines!”

Since Sanae could track auras, finding people was one of her specialties. In fact, she was scanning the area with her abilities even now. While it looked like she was just messing around she was doing her job.

“We're counting on you”

”Leave it to me! In return, pat my head a lot later”

”Okay, okay”

”Satomi-san, you won't pat me?”

“...You too, Sakuraba-senpai!?”

“Discrimination is not good. Pat Harumi too”

“Fine, I get it, geez...”

“Fufu... I'm looking forward to it”

While Youko still hadn't returned home after the sun had set, they still weren't sure if this was a serious situation or not. Thinking about it normally, there was a high chance she was just lost, so if Koutarou and the others worked together they would definitely find her. That's what everyone believed. The reason for that was probably the confidence that Koutarou and the others had built up through their many battles.

“Oh, I've found something right away!”

Not betraying their hope, Sanae found traces of what she suspected was Youko's aura. Sanae hadn't met Youko before but aura's were naturally similar to ones parents. Since she knew the greengrocer, it wouldn't be difficult to search for similar auras.

“Well done! Where is she!?”

”It looks like she headed towards that park. A happy aura was heading towards it”

“Let's go, the two of you!”

Having found a lead, Koutarou and the others headed towards the park. They found their pace naturally increasing. They wanted to find Youko as soon as possible and reunite her with her parents.

PART 6

The park was located in the middle of a residential area and was a so called children's park. It was a small park reaching only about ten meters in every direction, and in it were swings and slides. Sanae felt traces of Youko in this park.

“Hm, it's kind of going around in circles”

”In circles?”

“Yeah, like this”

Sanae ran around the park as she traced the traces of Youko's aura. Seeing Sanae run like that, Koutarou soon understood what Youko had been doing here.

“It looks like she was playing tag or something here”

Still maintaining her youthful appearance, Sanae truly looked like a child playing as she traced Youko's steps. She looked just like someone running away from 'it'.

“But it looks like she stopped from time to time. Like here, or... here”

After running for a while, Sanae stopped inside of the park equipment and the bushes by the edge of the park. Both unsuitable places for running away from 'it'.

“Satomi-kun, they might have been playing hide-and-seek”

“Yeah, that might be it”

While the places might be unsuitable for running around, they were great for hiding. If one assumed she was playing hide-and-seek, it would be natural for Youko to stop in those places. Moreover since you ran around to find a hiding spot at the start of every game, everything made sense.

“So maybe she hid and just fell asleep?”

“Well, it's still this hot after the sun has set, so it's possible”

”Higashihongan-san, can you tell where Youko-chan headed to last?”

“Wait a minute. I'll find it right away. Uhm...”

Sanae looked over the park. Because the children were running all over, the traces of their area were intermixed. While finding the newest trace of Youko from there and following wasn't hard, it would take time.

“This one, I think”

After looking at the park for a while, Sanae chose one aura of the many existing in the park. She believed it was the most recent trace of Youko's aura. Sanae carefully followed after those traces, and she soon found herself outside of the park, walking down road.

“Did You-chan leave the park?”

“Maybe she wasn't playing hide-and-seek anymore...”

Once outside the park, the chances of her playing hide-and-seek dropped significantly. Koutarou and Harumi were confused as this was far off from what they had suspected.

“Anyways, let's go”

”Yes”

However, nothing good would come from thinking too hard about it. Koutarou and Harumi nodded at each other and chased after Sanae who was following the trail.

“Huh?”

A few seconds after leaving the park, Sanae suddenly stopped. She then tilted her head and looked around the area.

“What is it?”

”Hmm, well, the aura stops here”

Sanae had stopped because the trace of Youko's aura had stopped. As if a line drawn with a pen had been erased, the trace past this point had vanished.

“What kind of thing would make that happen?”

”When you hid within an even bigger spiritual energy, or when entering a holy ground like a shrine... I think”

Since Sanae was following spiritual energy rather than smell, color or sound, there were primarily two ways of removing traces. That was either blending in with someone who had an even more powerful aura, or entering a place that didn't leave traces behind.

“But there's no tracer of a bigger spiritual energy”

“Then it's some kind of sacred ground?”

”If it is some kind of sacred ground, it's something that moves, so like portable shrine or hearse... that's all I can think of”

There weren't many moving sanctuaries that Sanae knew of. Portable shrines and hearses were tools for ceremony, but there hadn't been any festivals in this area so a hearse was the most likely possibility.

“There's no hearse here, so did she get on it?”

”I think so, but...”

Considering the traces of Youko's area vanished here, it was likely that she had gotten onboard a ceremonial tool, but it was hard to imagine a situation where the girl would get on. Sanae still wasn't convinced and looked around the area. That was when Harumi spoke up.

“Satomi-kun, there's something I would like to try...”

“What?”

Koutarou turned to look at Harumi, and she timidly explained herself.

“I was wondering if it was possible for magic to conceal spiritual energy traces...”

“Is there magic like that?”

“I don't know. That's why I was thinking of trying”

Harumi was wondering if it was possible to block traces of spiritual energy by using a magical barrier. Since she could use ancient magic through Signaltin, she wanted to give it a try.

“Okay, please do”

“Then... 'Oh spirits who live with people and rule life and mind. Gather before, hold hands and become a shield to protect against evil! Appear, Great Shield of Spirits!'”

Harumi spoke her incantation in ancient Forthorthe and her hair began glowing silver. The glow grew stronger as magical powered gather and caused her entire body to glow. Eventually, a thin film with a weak glow enveloped Koutarou and the others. It was a magical shield that removed any interferences regarding the soul.

“Now spirits shouldn't be able to see us”

Harumi wanted to confirm if not being able to be seen by spirits meant concealing spiritual energy.

“How does it look, Sanae?”

”Huh? I can still see your spiritual energy”

“Well, that's because you're inside”

“Right”

Sanae left the effective area of the spell and looked at Harumi and Koutarou once more.

“Ah! I can't see your spiritual energy!”

“Really!?”

“Yeah! I can see you two just fine, but I can't see the aura that should be with you!”

Harumi's spell had concealed their auras. As a result, Sanae who was on the outside of the shield couldn't sense their spiritual energy. Harumi's intuition had been right on.

“Now that I think about it, when Aika-san came, something like this happened?”

“Did it?”

“Yeah”

When Maki first fought Yurika, Sanae had lost sight of Yurika's spiritual energy partways through. The memories from back then had been erased with magic, but a short while after allying with Koutarou and the others, Maki removed the spell and Koutarou remembered what had happened back then.

“Well... this means that magicians might be involved”

“But Satomi-kun, wouldn't those magicians be Darkness Rainbow?”

”Eh? Those magical girlies again!?”

”Calm down, we still don't know for certain”

Yurika's Rainbow Hearts forbade the use of magic for self-interest. Which meant, that as long as a fight didn't happen, they wouldn't use defensive or stealth magic in the middle of a city. With that being the case, Darkness Rainbow became the prime suspects, but it

was hard to make a decision right away. Right now, it was just one of the possibilities.

“Hm?”

Koutarou's cell phone vibrated once in his pocket. He pulled out his phone and looked at the screen to see that he had gotten a mail.

Koutarou and the others had split up into four teams to look for Youko, but Yurika's mail had been sent to Koutarou's, Shizuka's and Theia's teams. The reason why Kiriha's team hadn't gotten the mail was because the information had been sent from them, over to Yurika, who then sent it to the rest. The mail read as following.

'I got a call from Kiriha-san. It seems like the greengrocer went to file a missing person report with the police, but it seems like there have been many reports of missing children today. The police accepted the greengrocer's report and are now supposedly examining if they should launch an open criminal investigation'

Youko was not the only missing child. Several had gone missing over these past few days. The children all lived in different parts of the city, and at first it was thought that they were all unrelated cases. However, as more and more cases happened, the police suspected that the cases were related to one another. By the time Youko had vanished, the police explained that to her parents.

PART 7

The kidnapped children were in the corner of some dark abandoned house. They were all children that hadn't even begun grade school and they were horribly uneasy and lonely. Obviously that would happen to young children who were taken from their parents.

“I'm glad you're keeping quiet. Baby sitting is not my style”

As expected, Darkness Rainbow were the ones behind the kidnappings. While Green and Blue were preparing their ritual, Crimson went out to kidnap children. Using magic made it simple and it wasn't hard to hide the traces.

“So you say. But you put all the noisy children to sleep with spells”

Green, who had recently started working together with Crimson more often, stopped her work and sighed.

When the kidnappings first started, many of the children had been screaming and crying for help. However, Crimson cast a spell on those children to put them to sleep. Not knowing that those children were just sleeping, seeing them simply stop moving like that, the other children were horrified. As a result, the children that were awake now couldn't cry out and were grouped up and trembling.

“...More accurately it's thanks to that girl. Not your baby sitting or spells”

Blue said as she pointed to a small magic circle that the children were confined within. It was a cage made out of magic.

Within the magic circle were ten children. Amongst them, four had been put to sleep with magic, leaving six awake. The oldest girl amongst the children was desperately trying to encourage the others.

“Everyone, cheer up. Someone will come save us”

”But, it's been so many days”

“Yeah! No one has come to save us!”

Youko was the one cheering up the other five children. She was almost done with kindergarten and having grown up in a busy home, she could keep things together better than the other children. While she did her best to endure her own fears, she kept trying to cheer up the others.

“Harukazeman will come! It's okay!”

”If it's Harukazeman...”

”But why hasn't he come yet?”

”He will come after beating up Baron Demon! So cheer up! He would be troubled otherwise!”

“Y-Yeah”

“Okay...”

Youko was a smart girl. She knew that Harukazeman was just a fictional character in a hero show. However, in this situation, his strength was needed. A hero of justice would come save them eventually, that kind of hope was necessary for the young children.

“...I'm glad she's just a child. If someone like that was an enemy it would be truly troublesome”

Calmly observing the children, Blue held Youko, though she didn't know her name, in high regards. Despite being in danger, Youko was still courageous, calm and thinking of how they could stay safe in this situation. Blue believed that Youko might even find a way to escape.

“In the end she's a kid. She can't do anything”

Crimson dropped her shoulders as she looked at the children. Since she believed power was everything, she didn't think a powerless child could do anything.

“Crimson, how were you ten years ago? Were you the kind of child that wouldn't do anything in this kind of situation?”

”That's...”

However, Crimson shut up when Blue pointed out. When Crimson had been a child, she had only been thinking about how she could pull one over the adults. She had been craving power since then, and she had outwitted adults who let their guard down more than a few times. She couldn't say for certain that the reverse wouldn't happen now.

“Let's put up some more tricks apart from the barrier to make sure they can't escape. That way it won't matter if they have power or not”

Green lent the confuted Crimson a helping hand. Even if there were several smart children in that group, they wouldn't be able to break through several different spells. According to Green's forecast, the chances of the children escaping after setting up several spells were next to none, and those near-none chances were almost all irregularities that could occur if the ritual was interrupted.

“Please do. I have to go out now anyways”

Crimson gratefully accepted Green's helping hand. And using that to her advantage she tried to leave to forcibly end the discussion.

“Where? We should have enough sacrifices”

However, Blue stopped Crimson. Crimson had been capturing children for sacrifices for their ritual, and having already gathered enough, there was no reason for Crimson to leave.

“I'm going to save Maki. The only uncertain element of this plan is what is going on with Maki right now, isn't it?”

While Crimson wanted to escape from here to avoid talking any more, she was also serious about saving Maki. Whether or not Maki was an enemy would greatly affect the outcome of this fight.

“Crimson, the plan I've come up with assumes that Navy-san has been mind controlled and will work against us”

Green who had come up with this plan had taken the case of Maki being an enemy into consideration. Machines, drugs, magic. There were all kinds of methods to control a human mind. It would be foolish to assume that Maki would just be a prisoner. Koutarou and the others would never actually do that, but since this was something Darkness Rainbow had done for hundreds of years they couldn't escape from the line of thinking that their enemies must be doing the same thing they are.

“But if Maki was on our side our chances of winning would go up right?”

“Well of course”

Green dropped her shoulders. There was no need to even forecast it, if Maki was an ally their chances of victory would become even more decisive.

“I've got nothing to do now that all the sacrifices have been gathered, so I think it's better than doing nothing”

”Well it is indeed better than just playing around”

After listening to Crimson, Blue changed her mind.

In this plan, Crimson was in charge of gathering sacrifices and Blue and Green were in charge of preparing the magic circle. However, Crimson had finished earlier than them. Even if Crimson joined in on preparing the magic circle they would lose time confirming the process and splitting up the work. Moreover, Crimson would be no use watching over the children, so leaving Maki to her was the most efficient way. Since if they could bring back Maki, the outcome would greatly change.

“Crimson, you just want to take back Navy-san, don't you?”

“Ahaha, you do get me, Green! I'll take her back, make her stronger and fight! Using all of my power!”

Crimson didn't want to save Maki just because of their mission. She wanted to help Maki because she saw her as her rival. According to Crimson's eye, Maki should be able to get stronger. Moreover, her strength should increase even more if given scientific magic. After that, Crimson would fight Maki. Since Crimson sought strength, she couldn't help but want to reclaim Maki so she could fight against someone strong.

Between Friend and Foe

PART 1

Monday, September 13

Upon reading Yurika's mail, Koutarou and the others determined that this was an emergency. In order to cover an even wider area, those who could move alone did so, such as Maki, who was used to going alone in the first place, the overwhelmingly strong Shizuka and Theia. The others stayed in groups. Since there was a high chance that Youko had been caught by serial kidnappers, there was no harm in being cautious.

"...I don't want to believe it but..."

Upon hearing about the string of kidnappings, Maki suspected that Darkness Rainbow was behind this. The reason for that was simple. Despite ten children being missing, there were no clues or witnesses, nor had the culprit given any demands. That's why this hadn't been treated as kidnappings but as missing children. And rather than ten cases in a row not producing any evidence or witnesses by coincidence, it was more likely that this was done by someone who had the ability to erase such things. In that kind of scenario, Maki's first thought was of magic. If Darkness Rainbow were to use magic to kidnap children there would be no evidence or eyewitnesses. They could even make the children head into deserted places on their own.

"...And if the kidnapped children were going to be used for energy then..."

One of the reasons why Maki suspected Darkness Rainbow was because only children had been kidnapped. Because young children

didn't have any specific thoughts or feelings, pure energy could be extracted from them. Choosing children with comparatively high talent with magic made that energy even purer. Since there were few children with magical talent, they had been gathered all over the city. There not being anything in common between them was the binding trait.

"...If Darkness Rainbow really is involved then..."

Having been a former member of Darkness Rainbow, she couldn't let it be if they were indeed involved with this incident. Because her own dark past was now trying to envelop Kitsushouharukaze city in darkness.

"...I have to protect it... this is a world within light after all..."

Maki headed towards the closest site where a child had gone missing. She had gotten information about the ten missing children through the Sun Rangers. In an attempt to find out if Darkness Rainbow was involved or not, Maki was going to examine the site.

"This is it"

Maki stopped by a riverbed. It was already night so there was nobody by the riverbed. She was wearing a Blue Knight blue and personal color indigo colored band of knights uniform, but in the night it was hard to tell the difference between the two.

"Now then, if they were to kidnap children using magic, where would they do it?"

Maki jumped down from the embankment to the riverbed and looked around the area. This was the place where one of the young

boys had gone missing. After playing soccer with friends on the riverbed, the boy never came home.

“There are more people in the urban area... so kidnapping should be done here”

Having been a member of Darkness Rainbow, Maki knew how they moved and behaved. She felt sad about that, but right now that experience was important to find the children. It wasn't the case to say that she didn't want to remember her own dark past.

“But in this open of an area, there would be eye witnesses. In that case...”

Maki had cast a spell to let her see through the darkness. That's why she could clearly see the riverbed despite it being night. Maki used that information and her experience to narrow down the places where a kidnapping could take place.

“Probably, here, or there”

Maki narrowed the potential places for kidnapping down to two. The first was below a bridge near the river bed's exit. The other was a large grassy area.

The reason why Maki suspected under the bridge was simple. It was a place where children would often play, so even if a spell was cast to guide the boy there, nobody would think much of it. Since the boy was supposedly carrying a ball, it wasn't hard to imagine that the boy would want to kick the ball against the concrete wall. It was a place out of view that everyone would overlook.

As for the other place, Maki thought the grassy area looked suspicious because of her experience in Darkness Rainbow. After

kidnapping the boy, the best way would be to create an illusion of him and have him walk around the riverbed for a while. Doing that would make the police misidentify the actual place of kidnapping. Having received reports of the boy walking around, the police wouldn't suspect that he had actually been kidnapped long before. The best place to kidnap, use a spell to substitute for the boy and for a magician to hide was the grassy area.

"...Analyze Magic"

Maki used analysis magic to examine the two places. Sadly, she found nothing under the bridge, but she discovered something like it in the grassy area.

"It's faint, but magical power around here is thinned out... after using a spell to kidnap the boy, they used a different spell to cover up their tracks before leaving"

The lead that Maki had found was that the natural magical power that should be around here couldn't be sensed.

If someone were to use magic here to kidnap children, some residual magical power would remain depending on the scale of the spell. In that case, using a second spell was to conceal that residual magical power from any opposing organizations was a normal tactic. So traces of a larger scale spell was concealed by using a smaller scale spell.

However, this method of concealment had a weakness, and that was that it erased the natural magical power in the area as well. There was an unnatural lack of magical power. This was similar to erasing the protective coating of a car by washing it too thoroughly. While it would eventually return to normal in the end, it took more than a couple of days.

That said, natural magical power was very weak, so one couldn't tell it was gone unless you examined it up close. Maki could only tell because she had narrowed the location down to this point. That's why Harumi, who was a magician like her, but lacked the training of a soldier, probably would have overlooked this.

“Using a large-scale spell at the location thought to be the kidnapping place and then concealing its traces... this is most definitely Darkness Rainbow's doing...”

Maki's expression turned serious.

It was possible that someone affiliated with Rainbow Heart had passed by for some unrelated reason and used magic before covering it up. But that would be too much of a coincidence and was unrealistic. Instead if someone had used magic to kidnap a child, Maki's thoughts naturally drifted towards Darkness Rainbow.

Maki could only think of one reason why Darkness Rainbow would kidnap ten children. That was to use them as an energy source for a large-scale ritual to attack Koutarou and the others. They would then claim the magical power in room 106 and challenge Rainbow Heart to a decisive battle.

“So it's finally starting... however, I won't let you!”

A strong sense of determination beamed from Maki's eyes. She now knew what it was to love, and that love wasn't just one's own, but each person had their own love. All love had to be protected. That's why she would definitely return the kidnap children to their parents. Maki had broken out from her own darkness and was now glowing brightly with determination and love.

PART 2

After mailing Koutarou that she believed that the series of kidnappings was done by Darkness Rainbow, Maki continued searching for clues.

Darkness Rainbow magicians carried advanced magical tools with them. There was of course their cane to exercise magic, and then there was their outfits enchanted with protective magic, but they also used many magical drugs and charms. In the cases that they didn't want to stand out, they also needed to conceal the magical power leaking out from those tools. Doing that would make them have to move while concealing magical power, which would leave an unnatural lack of natural magical power in their wake. Maki was following that trail, chasing after the culprit.

Maki left the riverbed and headed towards the suburbs of Kitsushouharukaze city. She was walking in an area that had been developed as a resort area in the 80's and 90's but once the economic bubble burst companies went bankrupt or discontinued their development one after another. As a result, a modern ghost town appeared. It was the remnants of someone's grand dreams.

"...If this caster had been a little better at information type spells, I wouldn't have been able to follow this trail..."

If the magical power used to conceal the magical power leaking from the user and their tools was weaker than what it was concealing, some faint traces would remain. At the same time, if it was too much an unnecessary amount of the surrounding area's magical power would be erased. The only case when that didn't happen was when the magical powers were perfectly matched. In those cases, only the traces of the user and their tools would be

erased, having no effect on the surrounding magical power. However, controlling that was incredibly difficult. The only one that could do that in Darkness Rainbow, was Dark Green, who specialized in information type magic. Fortunately, the magician Maki was following wasn't as good at information type magic as Maki was. As a result, she was just barely able to follow the trail.

“The kidnapper was definitely not Dark Green. If it was Purple or Blue, the trail would have been slimmer and I would lose them on the way. Which leaves Yellow, Orange and Crimson. Amongst them, the worst at information type magic is...”

By comparing her own skills with magic to Darkness Rainbow's skill with magic, Maki figured out who kidnapped the children.

“...I see, so she's here...”

Having figured out who the culprit was Maki stopped in place and smiled sadly. That person was the only person that she might call friend in Darkness Rainbow. While she was selfish, she was honest.

“That's right. Long time no see, Maki”

“Crimson...”

Dark Crimson. She wore a very dark red colored outfit and gave off an active impression. She suddenly appeared in front of Maki, sharing the same sad smile Maki did. The atmosphere around the two standing face to face in an uninhabited alley was as melancholic as the ghost town around them.

PART 3

Having received a mail from Maki, Yurika read its contents and forwarded it to Koutarou and the others, before deciding to join in on the search.

“Kanae-san, please take care of Nana-san”

”You don't have to tell me that. Yurika-chan, I'm your senior when it comes to being Nana-chan's cooperator”

”That's right. Then I'll leave it to you, Senpai”

“That sounds much better”

”Ahahaha”

Yurika left Nana to Kanae. She was reluctant to leave Nana to someone else after dragging her out of Folsaria but this was Yurika's duty, and Kanae had been Nana's cooperator from way back, so her reluctance to leaving Nana with Kanae was little.

“I'm going, Nana-san”

“Yurika-chan...”

Facing Yurika who was departing with a smile, Nana fought against her urge to stop her. Just like Koutarou, she didn't want Yurika to fight. That said, there were few as blessed with talent for magic as Yurika. That's why she had to see her off. She felt completely helpless. They were feelings that oppressed Nana, and she had felt the same way a year and a half ago.

“Please don't look so said, Nana-san”

Yurika realized Nana's complex emotions. In the past, Yurika didn't have the room to notice it. She had been thrown into the middle of a battle and no one in her surroundings understood her. Her talent for magic and skills aside, she was not at the level that could be called magical girl, she had her hands full with herself.

“But...”

“I'm different from the me last year. I have a lot of things I want to protect now”

Yurika had greatly matured in this past year and few months. She had gained courage, learned love and found a reason to fight. Yurika would fight to protect Koutarou, to protect Nana, to protect the girls of room 106, and to protect the many people living in this city, and their plain everyday life. She now had enough ability and mental fortitude to call herself a magical girl with confidence.

“You're right. I'm sorry. Then let me advise you as your senior magician”

“Thank you very much”

”Yurika-chan, there is not much one person can do. Rely on your allies when you have to”

“Please leave it to me. I'm good at relying on people”

Yurika jokingly answered. However, Nana could see right through her. She smiled wryly and chose to point out what Yurika was trying to hide.

“I'm talking about when it gets truly serious. Yurika-chan, you don't try to rely on others when it really matters”

”...Yes, I'll be careful”

When the matter had been so clearly pointed out, Yurika had no choice but to give up. She obediently nodded her head and promised Nana.

“And one more thing. Eleven years ago, when Maya had kidnapped Sanae-chan and Kiriha-san, she used a pretty large magical circle for her ritual”

”How big exactly?”

“About the same size as the underground parking lot of a normal building”

“That's pretty big”

“But this time ten children have been kidnapped, so if they plan to use all of them for the ritual, an even larger magic circle should be needed. They should need the basement of a large building”

”Yes, I understand!”

While Nana's body might have been handicapped, she still had her brain. Yurika smiled, thinking 'as expected of Nana', but she couldn't just be delighted.

“Then I'm going!”

”Good bye”

”Be careful!”

“Oka~y!”

Yurika kept Nana's advice at heart and left the cabin after saying goodbye to Nana and Kanae.

With Yurika gone, only Nana and Kanae were left in the cabin and the two stared at the door Yurika had run out of for a while.

“Nana-chan”

”Yes?”

”Yurika-chan is a good apprentice, isn't she?”

”Yes. She's my pride and joy number one disciple”

“My, you went big. My daughter is also my pride and joy”

“Then let's believe in our disciples and daughters and their friends”

”Yes. If it's them, I'm sure everything will work out”

Eventually the two of them smiled at each other. They were worried that Yurika and the others might be hurt, but they didn't think they would lose. Now that a magical girl with the title of Rainbow was heading to battle by her own volition, she would definitely return victorious. That's what they had told themselves in the past when they themselves fought. And like they had proclaimed, they had continued coming out victorious. That's why the two could smile, as they believed Yurika and the others would do the same.

Having returned to the surface from the Blue Knight in orbit, she grouped up with Koutarou who was the closest to her. The two then began looking for the missing children together.

“Yurika, you could have just stayed with Nana-san you know?”

But as expected, Koutarou wanted Yurika to stay with Nana. They had finally met again after so long, and even if they hadn't peacefulness suited Yurika better. If possible, he didn't want her to get involved.

“This is my duty. If Darkness Rainbow are committing evil deeds, I have to fight them in order to protect my own happiness”

If Darkness Rainbow was acting behind the scenes, it was the duty of a magical girl from Rainbow Heart to stop them. While it was just a chance that they were involved, it wasn't something they could ignore. She couldn't take an optimistic view and let the worst come to the worst.

Above all else, Yurika knew that in order for her to lead a happy life, all those around her needed to lead happy lives as well. If they didn't she couldn't even eat some instant noodles in peace and quiet. To Yurika, taking action here was necessary.

“I won't accept it. You showing the face of a magical girl is an unhappy thing”

The reason Yurika fought was simply because she had been born with a talent for magic. That's why she should be allowed to live the life of a normal high school girl.

“...If you feel that way, then it's not unhappy at all, Satomi-san”

However, Yurika didn't see herself as unhappy. While Koutarou could admit that Yurika was a magical girl, he didn't want her to live as one. As long as Yurika had someone that wished she lived a plain and ordinary life, Yurika wouldn't feel unhappy no matter how fierce of a battle she was dragged into. That was especially true since she had endured a period where no one had understood her.

“That's not true”

“Am I unhappy?”

“Yeah”

”Then you should comfort me, Satomi-san”

”Come on now...”

”You shouldn't show it with words but with actions. Like a kiss”

Yurika drew closer to Koutarou and obviously stretched forwards with her lips pushed out.

“Stop acting stupid and let's go cut off that source of unhappiness”

Koutarou one-sidedly ended that discussion and walked ahead of Yurika. Seeing that, Yurika let out a small sigh.

“...You will lose out on a lot in your life, Satomi-san”

Yurika didn't mind anything Koutarou did to her. In fact, she had been just fine if he had kissed her. However, Koutarou wanted to treasure her just because of the way she was. If he had been a little bit more selfish his life might have been more fun.

“If you're going to go on about loss and profit, then you'll end up overlooking the really important things”

”Important things... like the fact that I love you?”

“...”

Smack.

“What are you doing!? You don't have to be so embarrassed”

“I'm not talking about small stuff like that”

Koutarou muttered as he continued walking on ahead. Yurika didn't follow the meanings of those words right away and stared at Koutarou's back.

“Aha”

However, after a few seconds she understood the meaning and smiled, before running after him. As she thought, Koutarou was embarrassed.

“That's the kind of thing I love about you”

Yurika lined up next to Koutarou and smiled gently as she talked to him. Koutarou caught a glance of her smile before turning his face away.

“...Shut up and look for the kids. This is an emergency”

”Oka~y”

Understanding the meaning of Koutarou's actions, Yurika looked down with a smiled for a moment before looking around the area in search for the children.

PART 4

Koutarou and Yurika searched for the children as they followed after Maki.

If Darkness Rainbow was indeed involved, she would eventually come into contact with them. When that happened, having more allies would be better. However, Maki had encountered one of the members of Darkness Rainbow, Dark Crimson before they could link up.

“You look better than I thought, Maki”

”My treatment is pretty good after all”

The two faced each other on a vacant lot a little bit off the main road. They didn't want to stand out even if they were just talking. Their appearances were that of lovely girls of age, but being spotted in the middle of night would be problematic.

“That said... has nobody warned you about your outfit ever since I vanished? They're all wrinkled up”

”There's no one that's as nagging as you. Orange called it wild and cool, and my subordinates are too scared to say anything”

”Geez, Darkness Rainbow's status is plummeting”

“It's a group to allow such selfishness to pass”

”That's true”

Their discussion was light hearted, and the atmosphere around them was like that between classmates. In Darkness Rainbow, this kind of friendly relationship was rare.

“So, what are you doing now, Crimson”

“I've come to save you, Maki”

Maki wanted to ask about the kidnappings, but Crimson's answer was different than what she had wanted.

“Me?”

Surprised by Crimson's answer, Maki's eyes opened wide. In Darkness Rainbow, captives were only considered as a potential risk that could leak information. The thought of saving a captive never occurred to them, instead the captives were left to die or were disposed of. That's why Maki couldn't hide her surprise when heard the word 'save' come out of Crimson's mouth.

“Yes. The decisive battle with Rainbow Heart is near, so if possible I want to take you back. There's not enough time to recruit a new Dark Navy”

”I see now...”

In the decisive battle against Rainbow Heart, Darkness Rainbow needed as many forces as they could get their hands on. Rather than fighting without one of the seven leaders, saving Maki was more reasonable. They weren't saving her because she was Maki, but because they needed another pawn. It was a very Darkness Rainbow-like logic, and it made sense to Maki as well.

“I can't come back”

Maki said and shook her head. On her neck was a mechanical collar. Darkness Rainbow should be suspecting that the collar was a tool to force Maki to obey.

“...I wonder if that collar can really kill you”

“The truth is I don't really know what it is. I didn't put it on myself. That said, it's not like I can really try”

Maki's shoulders slumped. She had expected questions like this so she wasn't shocked in the slightest. She gave Crimson a prepared answer in a natural fashion. This answer didn't contain any lies, Maki hated those. As a result, the atmosphere around her was the same as always.

“But before that... Maki, you're staying on that side out of your own will, aren't you?”

However, Crimson's next question made Maki feel like her heart was being pulled out of her chest. She couldn't believe that Crimson, who never thought too deeply about anything, would be able to see through her. Maki carefully answered while repressing her unrest.

“Why do you think that?”

“That's because you look like you've gotten stronger”

Crimson smiled and her long hair fluttered in the night wind, it was as if it was burning, and that greatly increased the threatening atmosphere she had.

“Until I met you, I thought you were being forced to obey because of that collar. But don't you think it's strange that you'd get stronger if you're being forced?”

Crimson guessing that Maki was acting of her own free will was because of her logic as someone who sought to fight the strong.

If Maki was being threatened with the collar and forced to work, she should be getting weaker. If Maki had no reason to act on her own will and was simply taking action because she didn't want to die, there was no way she'd have much if any mental fortitude.

Yet, Crimson sensed clear mental fortitude within Maki. Even more than ever before at that. In a battle with magic, willpower had a huge influence on the outcome. If Maki's willpower had increased, then she should be even stronger than before.

“That's why I thought. Ahh, Maki must be acting of her own will”

”Crimson...”

Crimson's intuition was correct. Maki sensed that trying to hide it wouldn't work against her anymore. However, she still couldn't see Crimson's intentions, so she continued speaking as she followed the flow so far.

“Even if it's as you say... what are you planning to do, Crimson? Purge me right here? Or report to everyone that I'm a traitor?”

Since just being a risk to leak information would cause Darkness Rainbow to leave you to die, or dispose of you, betrayal should warrant an even more severe response. Chances were high that she could be purged right here and now, or be reported to all six of the other leaders and have them come slay her all together.

“Why do I have to do something as wasteful as that? What I need are battles with the strong. Maki, I welcome you getting stronger”

Crimson prioritized her own desires over the logic of her organization. To her, fighting and winning against the strong was

everything. Improving herself was all that mattered, the rest didn't matter.

“Fighting the you from before would hardly have gained me anything... but you are different now. You're someone worth fighting!”

Crimson smiled happily. Maki had been strong when she was in Darkness Rainbow, but not on the level of Crimson who saw fighting as everything. Moreover, Crimson specialized in energy tyype magic, which gave her an advantage over Maki. That's why Crimson was always waiting for Maki to get stronger, as if waiting for the right time to harvest.

Finally, Maki grew stronger by leaving Darkness Rainbow. She became someone with the power Crimson had hoped for, and became someone worth fighting. However, if Crimson reported Maki's betrayal to her allies, she would lose her chance to fight her. That's why she refrained from reporting it and chose not to tell Maki to come back. Her battle with Maki, which she had always waited for, had come.

“I have no intentions of letting this chance go by! Fight me, Maki”

”You are Darkness Rainbow to your very core, Crimson...”

Darkness Rainbow's concept was to prioritize your own wishes and use magic to fulfill them. Crimson was currently prioritizing her own desires while ignoring the reasoning of Darkness Rainbow as an organization. Because Crimson was like Darkness Rainbow, she ignored the organization itself. Crimson had the same way of thinking as Maya. That's why Maki had reached the conclusion that she couldn't convince Crimson.

“...Crimson”

“What?”

“I probably wanted to become friends with you”

Up until now, Maki had lived while being surrounded by solitude and betrayal. That's why Maki liked Crimson's way of life, honest and staying true to her own feelings. She had always been interested in her. To Maki it was most likely a small comfort in the darkness she had been in.

“Is that so. But I wanted to fight against you”

However, Crimson didn't think of it the same way. It was because she was honest that she had single-mindedly been wanting to fight Maki. However, Maki seemed to have a psychological wall, preventing her from demonstrating her true strength. That's why Crimson had been interested in Maki.

“So we were after different things from the beginning... what a shame”

Steeling herself, Maki readied her cane. They had both been interested in each other, but what they wanted from each other was inherently different. Since Maki liked Crimson's honest side, she couldn't resolve this difference in desires. Crimson truly wanted to fight against Maki now that she had overcome the wall in her way. That's why Maki had to fight, because she liked Crimson.

“Maki, I feel like we've finally gotten the chance to be open with each other”

”How ironic. It's not until this happened that we were finally able to become friends”

The two shared sad smiles. It was the same expression they had shown when they first met just now. It's possible that they had suspected this would happen from the very start.

“Even if we're friends, I won't hold back, Maki”

”Don't worry, Karen. I know”

Crimson's real name was Karen. When Maki had told Crimson her real name, she had replied in kind.

“I told you not to call me that name”

However, Crimson didn't like her own name. She wanted to grow strong, yet her name was Karen. The image of her name didn't suit the image of who she wanted to be, and so she had told Maki to call her Crimson instead.

“I remember. I just wanted to say it once more”

”Then you'll fight for real once as well?”

“Yes. You're my friend after all”

”Fufu, I'm looking forward to it”

The two exchanged smiles one more time before raising their canes above their heads and incanting the spell to create a barrier. Despite there being a battle between the two about to start, the expressions on their faces was far from that one showed their enemy.

PART 5

To Crimson, being strong was everything. Because of that, she didn't miss a single day of training. As a result, her reflexes were faster and she finished her incantation sooner. Moreover, since she focused on training her energy-type spells they packed a big punch.

Maki on the other hand wasn't that stuck on combat. Maki specialized in mind manipulation spells, so her strongest point was before a battle began. It wasn't like she was bad at fighting, but she had no choice but to admit that she was inferior to Crimson when it came to fighting.

“Night Walker! Recall – Precast – Category Alpha!”

Because of that, Maki saw the very beginning of the battle as the most important. She activated more than ten spells she had cast ahead of time and left on standby, enhancing her physical abilties and her brain activity. Crimson would of course do the same thing, but enhancing physical abilities and brain activity was Maki's specialty, so with this, there was a high chance that Maki could fight evenly against Crimson.

However, there was one problem, and that was that Crimson had been faster when it came to casting the first spell.

“That's strange! What is the meaning of this!?”

However, going against Maki's expectations, Crimson didn't enhance her body and mind for some reason. This was clearly different from how she normally fought. The Crimson she knew would have enhanced her abilities before aggressively attacking up close and personal.

“When I came here, I fought against some strange people... and that's when I realized”

Crimson practically stood still as she looked at Maki glowing from all the spells she had cast on herself. Maki wasn't just casting spells on herself, but also on her cane and it's form changed to that of a greatsword. At this rate, Maki with her enhanced abilities would rapidly close in and cut Crimson in half with her greatsword. However, Crimson showed no sign of panic, but it wasn't like she had given up on winning. Seeing that, Maki felt that was an incredibly frightening thing.

“Realize what!?”

”Just like how there's a proper way for a swordsman to use a sword, there's a proper way for a magician to use magic— Ray of Sunshine – Modifier – Single Wavelength – Target Option – Gaze Tracking”

When Maki was almost right in front of her, Crimson began her incantation.

Preposterous!! What can she do with a sunray!?

Crimson had cast a spell that created a powerful light. However, some light wouldn't stop Maki. If she stared straight into the light she might lose her sight for a while, but she was confident she could still cut Crimson down even like that. Aiming for the eyes of someone moving at high speed was hard. Even if everything went perfectly, Maki would only lose sight in one of her eyes.

Would Crimson, a prodigy of fighting, make such a foolish decision!? That’s not possible! There’s definitely something else behind this!

In the next moment, Maki forcibly changed her direction and tried to move away from Crimson. She hadn't figured out what Crimson was trying to do, but she understood her fixation with battles more than anyone. That's why there had to be a reason for Crimson to use this spell. You could say that Maki believed in Crimson's strength.

“Kyaaaa!?”

Maki's intuition had been correct. Just as Crimson's incantation finished, two of the three defensive spells Maki had cast were blown away. The third spell was still present, but it was unstable after taking heavy damage. Fortunately, Maki herself hadn't taken damage, but she still didn't understand what had happened. Together with the power, this proved to be a big threat to Maki.

What did she do!? What destroyed the defensive spells wasn’t magical power! I could only sense magical power used to activate her spell! Did she send something flying!?

Maki panicked. She didn't know what Crimson's attack was. If she took the same attack once more, she would suffer major damage.

“Quick Cast – Force Field!!”

Maki jumped backwards and distanced herself whilst casting another defensive spell. If she didn't have at least two layers of defense she wouldn't be able to block Crimson's attacks.

“Maki, if you don't solve this problem quickly, you'll get worn down!”

Crimson launched her second attack.

That attack destroyed the remaining third defensive spell and the newly cast Force Field. Not only was it powerful, but it was accurate as it hit Maki while on the move.

It's powerful and accurate. If she's sending something flying it's frighteningly fast... but Crimson's incantation was just that of a light spell... wait, light!?

In that instant, the sight of Theia pulling out a weapon from the Blue Knight appeared in Maki's mind. That appearance let Maki know the truth behind Crimson's attack.

"I see, so that's what it is..."

"Oh, you've already figured out what I'm doing?"

"Yes... that magic, it's a laser isn't it?"

Since Maki had seen Theia's laser cannon in action, she realized what Crimson's attack really was. Lasers hit the same moment they fired and packed a punch, and they were very accurate. It fit Crimson's attack to a T.

"Bingo! As expected from Maki!"

Despite Crimson having the mystery behind her attack being revealed, she seemed happy. To her, powerful enemies was everything. She wanted a very close fight. That's why she didn't want Maki to get defeated one-sidedly without ever figuring out what Crimson was doing.

"To think you'd use science to enhance magic"

“I had a hard time reworking my magic theory from the very basics you know”

Crimson let out an exaggerated sigh as she tapped her shoulder with her cane. Doing something like that in the middle of battle left her wide open, but she knew that Maki wouldn't use their conversation to launch a surprise attack.

“That's definitely not like you”

”This is what happens when you lose to a non-magician only using scientific theories”

Crimson's 'non-magician' was none other than Kiriha. Using her brain and knowledge as weapons, she defeated Crimson and Green. As a magician capable of altering reality, getting outwitted by a normal human was a horrible humiliation. She had thought that she was amazing, but had been taught that she knew nothing of the world. However, that gave Crimson a chance to change herself. Even though it wasn't like her, it was necessary to defeat Kiriha.

“I know saying this sounds bad, but... we Folsarians value magic so much that we're simply too unscientific”

Their lack of understanding of science made their magic inefficient. A simple example was a spell to create fire. Folsarians don't understand the mechanics behind combustion, that's why when they created fire, they would get a red flame they saw in everyday life.

The red flame was because of a large amount of impurities and insufficient oxygen. It was an imperfect combustion. A more efficient flame was pale blue. While they should be creating that

faint blue flame, magicians made red flames. Their preconceptions and common sense got in the way and they wasted energy.

By introducing advanced scientific knowledge, Crimson removed such waste. As a result, the energy was used more efficiently, and the power of her magic increased greatly.

“So that's why it's a laser”

“Maki, I knew you would try to oppose me by enhancing your abilities, that's why I use magic that moves at the speed of light. It's only rational don't you think?”

“To think I'd hear you use the word rational. What a strange feeling”

“Are you picking a fight?”

”Well of course. We're fighting after all. I'm also buying time to think of a countermeasure”

“Hurry up and think of something! You don't have much time!”

The two moved at the same time. They each began on each their own incantation.

“Ray of Sunshine – Modifier – Single Wavelength -Target Option – Gaze Tracking”

Crimson's spell was the laser from before. It was a spell with a single wavelength of light that had a lot of power and would strike whatever she looked at. Unlike normal lasers it hadn't even been colored. It was a nightmare of an attack that blew away whatever she looked at in an instant.

“Fog Cloud!”

Maki on the other hand cast a simple spell that created fog. However, this fog was the best way of blocking Crimson's laser.

The fog blocked Crimson's view, throwing her aim off, and as the laser passed through the fog it would get diffused, rapidly weakening its effects. While the fog alone wasn't enough to fully block it, the laser was weakened to the point that defensive spells could take the hit.

“Good thinking, Maki! Thermovision!”

However, since she had known Maki for long, Crimson had expected that her vision might get obstructed. She quickly cast a spell to allow her to see heat and spotted Maki through the fog. She then pointed her cane towards Maki.

“Explosion!!”

Crimson unleashed a new attack against Maki. It was a cannon fired using magic. Installed underneath her cane was a metallic cylinder. Inside was a cannonball, and by creating an explosion within the cylinder, the cannonball was expelled.

“It's over, Maki!”

Alongside a dulled roar, the cannonball was fired out of its barrel. Since the explosion was focused forward thanks to the cylinder, it was much more powerful than using Explosion directly on Maki, and the speed of the cannonball was incredibly high. It was an ideal way of attacking Maki who was on the other side of the fog. Of course, the recoil was big, and even though Crimson was holding her ground she was still pushed back a little.

The cannonball cut through the air and flew straight at Maki at an overwhelming speed of two kilometers per second. At this range there was no way to block the cannonball. It would easily smash through even a triple layered defense. Crimson was convinced that this attack would defeat Maki.

“I don't think so!”

”Maki!?”

However, the cannonball didn't hit Maki. She wasn't standing where Crimson had aimed, but somewhere else. Maki dashed out of the side of the fog and charged Crimson with her greatsword. That was when Crimson noticed that Maki wasn't emitting any heat from her body.

I see, so that’s what the fog was for!

That was when Crimson finally realized Maki's aim. By obstructing the view, Maki forced Crimson to focus on heat. She then cut off the heat from her own body and created a dummy. After that all she had to do was use the fog to easily get closer to Crimson.

“Haaaah!!”

”Makiii!!”

Maki's greatsword closed in on Crimson. Since that sword was a magical blade attached to Maki's cane, Crimson's life was in danger. That's why she took a big chance.

“You can have an arm or twooo!!”

Considering the timing, defensive spells wouldn't make it in time. The recoil from her cannon had also been too large, making it difficult to block with her cane. So instead, Crimson swung her left fist at Maki's greatsword.

This was an incredibly dangerous action. By touching Maki's greatsword, a heavy impact hit Crimson's left arm. Since it was a blade created from magic, just touching it caused major damage. As a result, in exchange for avoiding a direct hit on her body, Crimson lost her ability to move her left arm.

But that wasn't the only problem. Memory loss magic had been cast on Maki's greatsword. That's why, at the same time as Crimson lost her ability to use her arm, she lost several seconds of memories.

“You did well blocking that, Crimson! But I win!”

Crimson lost sight of Maki, having lost several seconds of her memory. Maki pulled back her greatsword before launching another attack. Maki was going to defeat Crimson and her victory was certain. Anyone watching would surely think that way.

“Explosion!!”

”Wha!?”

However, that was when something unexpected happened. Crimson had lost her most recent memories, but the explosion magic that she was supposed to use within her barrel was now used in the middle of nowhere. The explosion was cast right in front of Crimson, and in front of Maki. This was Crimson's real bet. If she lost her memories, she should try to use her explosion magic again in an attempt to fire her cannon. Rather than being beaten by the greatsword, she would rather throw her arm away and avoid a

direct hit to her body, whilst blowing herself up in an attempt to make this a match of luck. The timing was a little sketchy depending on the effect of the memory loss, but Crimson won this bet.

Like that, the two of them were caught up in the explosion. By the time the sand cloud kicked up by the explosion cleared, no one was standing.

PART 6

Since Maki was in the middle of attacking, she didn't have the time to brace herself from the shockwave, and she was thrown across the ground. Because of that she took a lot of damage, and could no longer get up. While she was conscious, she felt impatient over being unable to move her body because of the pain all over. All she could do was look up into the starry sky. With the season turning from summer to fall, the stars were beautiful.

“Maki”

With the beautiful starry sky as her background, Crimson looked at Maki's face. Unlike Maki who couldn't move, Crimson still could. Luck had sided with her.

“...You win, Crimson”

Maki honestly admitted her defeat and smiled at Crimson. The battle was decided. The girl in front of her was no longer an enemy. She was Maki's friend.

“I don't feel like I've won, being like this...”

While Crimson had won, she was in a wretched state. Like Maki, she had also been caught up in the explosion and suffered major damage. She also couldn't move her left arm yet either. However, because of the difference in their stances, Crimson had taken less damage from the shockwave., and she was barely able to stand. In other words, she had only won because of their difference in luck. Crimson didn't feel like she had won because she hadn't overcome Maki through ability. According to Crimson's senses, there wasn't a big difference in their abilities.

“They say luck is a skill. Be proud, Crimson, or you'd be rude to the loser”

Maki who hated lies and bravely faced her defeat. There were no lies or deception in the battle, so a loss was a loss. She honestly accepted her defeat. The fact that her opponent was Crimson also had a big effect on it. She was someone she wouldn't regret losing to.

“...Fufu, I don't hate that side of you”

Crimson had a satisfied smile. While luck had determined the outcome, they had both used all of their strength to fight. This was the kind of fight Crimson wanted. That's why she was satisfied. She would have probably felt the same way even if she had been the loser.

“But still, I'm surprised... to think you'd use a cannon. The laser was a surprise, but the cannon even more so”

Maki laughed as she looked at the cane in Crimson's right hand. A barrel of a cannon was installed on it. It was a surprising method of attack one wouldn't expect from a magical girl.

“But why didn't you use Inferno Fire? You would have been able to create an even more amazing cannon with that”

Crimson's strongest offensive magic was Inferno Fire. It was even more powerful than the Explosion that she had used to fire the cannonball. Maki was bothered by why Crimson hadn't used that to launch her cannonball instead.

“If I use Inferno Fire, the barrel won't survive. I'd need an even bigger barrel, and the recoil would be too big. Explosion is enough to overcome defensive spells and I can fire it repeatedly. More power isn't everything”

Before this battle, Crimson had actually gone through several tests. As a result, she believed that using this barrel with Explosion was the most optimal way. By the way, when she tried using Infernal Fire, she had an awful experience. She didn't want to use that in real combat.

“And that's why we didn't both go down”

“That's right”

If the final attack had been Infernal Fire instead, both Maki and Crimson probably would have been reduced to ashes. The reason that hadn't happened was because Crimson had chosen an appropriate method of attack. While it might have been within a barrel, creating an explosion next to yourself was a big risk.

“So you won by using the new powers you created for the sake of winning. Did I satisfy you, Crimson?”

”Yes... thank you for fighting seriously, Maki”

There was one more reason as to why Crimson was so satisfied with the battle. That was that Maki had actually fought. Since most of Maki's spells were focused on mind manipulation, she wasn't as suited for fighting as the more energy-type focused Crimson. She would have been safer creating disturbances with her magic and running away. Nevertheless, Maki had fought. Crimson was grateful for that.

“That's what I said at first. Since we're friends we should at least fight seriously once”

”That's right, my bad”

In the end, Maki was true to herself from start to finish. There were no lies in here words, and she had kept her promise until the end. Crimson smiled wryly at her friend who had gotten stronger, but remained the same. However, shortly thereafter her her smile vanished. Someone had invaded the barrier that had been raised before the battle.

“It looks like we've got guests”

“This feeling, I'm sure it's Satomi-kun”

Maki recognized this feeling of the barrier being passed through. According to her memories, it should be Koutarou.

“Him, huh... guess I can't stay for long”

Crimson frowned. Assuming that the intruder was one of Maki's allies was appropriate. If Maki was correct, the formidable adversary, Satomi Koutarou, was approaching. Since Crimson didn't think Maki would lie, she knew that she would meet Koutarou if she remained. Being seriously hurt, Crimson decided to leave right away in order to avoid another battle.

“Cya, Maki”

Crimson shouldered her cane and turned her back to Maki.

“Crimson, wait. Are you sure you don't need to kill me?”

Surprised by Crimson's actions, Maki instinctively stopped her. In response, Crimson only turned her head to look at Maki and smiled.

“You went along with me and fought. And because of that, I'll go along with your style too”

“...Crimson...”

Crimson had no intention of killing Maki. She knew that Maki had fought to fulfill her desire. That's why Crimson would comply with Maki's desire and left as a friend.

“But the next time we meet it won't end like this. Next time, I will treat you as an enemy and kill you”

“...I don't think I'll show any mercy either”

Maki's and Crimson's friendship ended here. From this point on they were enemies. They wouldn't do another one on one battle, but attack as a group. It was clear that their desires weren't matching up, so this was where their relationship ended.

“See you, Maki. Today was fun”

Crimson spoke those words and smiled as she left.

“Karen!”

Maki called out to Crimson one last time using her real name. Hearing that Crimson stopped for an instant before deciding not to turn around and vanished into the darkness.

“...Good bye, Karen...”

To Maki, Crimson was a small flame she had found in the darkness. However, that flame never flared up, and distanced itself from Maki. She felt that was sad, but since she couldn't live like that flame, she didn't try stopping Crimson from leaving.

Gathering

PART 1

Monday, September 13

Having found Maki covered in wounds, Koutarou and Yurika rushed her back to room 106. They had to get her treated as quickly as possible, but there was also something else they had to do. And that was to have an emergency meeting deciding on a plan on how to go ahead.

With Maki's testament, it became apparent that Darkness Rainbow had appeared in Kitsushouharukaze city again. There was no longer any doubt that they were behind the kidnappings. Continuing a vague search in this kind of situation was extremely dangerous. They needed to all gather and decide on a plan.

"...First thing we need to think of is what Darkness Rainbow's objective is"

The meeting began once everyone had gathered by the tea table. Kiriha was the first to start the discussion. Darkness Rainbow had some kind of objective, and the children had been kidnapped for that purpose. That's why if they didn't know what Darkness Rainbow was after, they might inadvertently do something that would create an irreparable situation. They had to keep Darkness Rainbow's objective in mind at all times.

"Hey Yurika, what are those Darkness whatever after?"

Sanae turned to Yurika, she wanted to hear the professional's opinion on this.

“Darkness Rainbow are after the magical power gathered in room 106”

Yurika couldn't treat this as someone else's problem. She fluently answered the question with a serious expression. That was the kind of Yurika that Koutarou hated.

“Yurika-chan, I don't get that part... what are they going to do with the magical power?”

Shizuka asked as she wrapped Maki in bandages. Maki's treatment was mostly over, and her body was covered in bandages. However, her complexion looked good, she would recover shortly.

“Well, Darkness Rainbow wants to freely use magic, that's why they don't get along with the kingdom government who says that magic shouldn't be misused”

The magical kingdom of Folsaria had restricted the use of magic to prevent the mistakes of the past from repeating. However, Darkness Rainbow insisted that magic was one's own power and that restricting it was strange, and got into conflict with the kingdom.

“So, they want to overthrow the nation?”

“In the worst case scenario, yes. Darkness Rainbow aren't thinking about taking over the nation, but they want to eliminate those who restrict magic. Since it's the country doing it, if the conflict intensified, then their objective would be to overthrow the nation”

“More accurately, I think the battle to overthrow the nation has already begun. When I was in Darkness Rainbow, they were already preparing for the decisive battle”

Maki added in on Yurika's explanation. She had been one of the leaders for Darkness Rainbow, so she was well versed in this.

“The reason I aimed for room 106 was to gather more war potential in preparations for our battle with Rainbow Heart, Folsaria's army”

In order to fight against the magical kingdom of Folsaria, Darkness Rainbow started by gathering powerful magical tools. Part of the reason why was because Darkness Rainbow was smaller than Folsaria's Rainbow Heart. If they fought up front, their defeat was inevitable. There, Darkness Rainbow sought to turn the table with the powerful artifacts. This was the same way as terrorists and guerilla trying to turn the tables with new weapons or chemical weapons. They were trying to make up for their fewer numbers with more powerful weapons.

“Since Folsaria knows that too, magicians like me have been getting in the way all this time”

Knowing that if they let this be, a battle would eventually erupt, the Folsaria side couldn't stay quiet. Those who mastered magic in Rainbow Heart were given the title of Rainbow. Currently, there were seven who held that title. Up until now, Rainbow Heart had been sending out those seven to get in the way of Darkness Rainbow. Yurika was one of them, and she had gotten in the way of Darkness Rainbow claiming the magical power in room 106 for over a year.

“So because they desired freedom, Darkness Rainbow ended up becoming an anti-government faction... no wonder they got along so well with our radical faction”

Kiriha wrapped up the discussion. While Darkness Rainbow and the People of the Earth's radical faction had a different process and

purpose, they shared the point of being hostile towards the current structure. It wasn't that uncommon to see two factions working together until they destroyed the existing structure in Earth's history.

Kiriha's interpretation had been correct, but it was still missing some important elements. So Maki told the group about what she knew.

“Strictly speaking, the first spark was an internal conflict within Rainbow Heart when discussing if they should try returning to their old home or not. Darkness Rainbow was formed by the people who rebelled against the kingdom's policy. Darkness Rainbow was originally part of Rainbow Heart”

“Such a thing happened... so there are some complex circumstances”

Koutarou was surprised by Maki's words. He had only believed that Darkness Rainbow was a gathering of evil magical girls. But thinking about it calmly, he realized that this wasn't an anime or a manga, there was no way that it would be that simple. It was only proper that both sides had their circumstances and objectives.

“The magical kingdom of Folsaria was made by people who were exiled after making a large mistake several hundreds of years ago. That's why they chose to adhere to their punishment and not try returning”

Folsaria was a kingdom with a king. The reason for that was because they had rebelled against the king in the past, hunting for wealth and power. As a result, they were exiled. As proof of their regret, the Folsarians created a kingdom with a king. For the same

reason, they didn't try to return to their true home from their place of exile.

“But those who would go on to form Darkness Rainbow couldn't accept that. They couldn't stand to be confined within the small borders of Folsaria for a sin they didn't commit”

However, after some generations of Folsarians passed, the memory of the sin and punishment weakened within the people, and a huge discussion took place within Folsaria.

At that time, the magical kingdom of Folsaria had a lot of problems. The country was very small, which caused all kinds of problems to appear as the population increased. There was insufficient food and dwellings, and a wide difference in the rich and poor appeared. The polluted area increased and the country was tilting.

That was when a group of people who insisted that they concentrate their magic and return to their true home in order to overcome the crisis. Several generations had already passed, and those who had committed the sin were long gone. The group exclaimed that they should just return to their home and ask for help.

Of course, many agreed with this, especially with the poorest of the population, and before long a second discussion split the country in two.

”But in the end they couldn't change the country's policy. That's why they used their own magic in an attempt to return to their true home”

Instead of resolving the problem themselves, by expanding their influence outwards in search of wealth and authority they would

only repeat the same mistakes of the past. That's why the magical kingdom of Folsarian determined that even if they were to try to return to their true home, they would have to resolve all of their problems themselves or they would not be able to redeem themselves from their past sins.

Justice could be found in this conclusion. That's why the emotional Folsaria citizens could calm down and begin working to improve the country with their own strength. With the controversy over, the citizens were implanted with a desire to improve their country.

Thus the rioting was quelled but a portion of people still weren't satisfied. They left Folsaria and began taking independent action under the name of Darkness Rainbow. There was but one goal. To concentrate their magic and return to their true home.

“So that's why Folsaria forbade the private use of magic”

”Yes. At first it was just to stop people from returning. However, because of that Darkness Rainbow became even more extreme and private use of magic was completely prohibited”

“But they went against that”

“Yes, they just couldn't give up”

At first, Darkness Rainbow simply acted to return to their true home. However, with Folsaria forbidding their activities, they armed themselves and continued by force. The confrontation between the two continued to intensify until they were finally at war.

“However, the intensification of the battles weakened their sense of purpose. And many joined for other reasons... just like me...”

In order to make up for their lack of combat potential, Darkness Rainbow began recruiting under the purpose of free use of magic. As a result, their sense of purpose for their original objective to return to their true home was weakened, and the darker side of the organization, to freely use magic to fulfill your own ambitions, was strengthened.

“The current Darkness Rainbow are just the ruins of their past ideal and dreams. They've lost their purpose and taken the wrong path, leaving only a shell of an organization. Our enemy are the seven... no, six, magical girls who represent that organization”

The current Darkness Rainbow had forgotten about their original objective. However, they continued under the purpose of allowing free use of magic. For that sake, they sought to overthrow the Folsarian government.

“You guys have a surprisingly heavy standpoint”

”Sanae-chan... I was recruited on the spot, so I didn't really understand. But that's a really complex standpoint huh...”

”Follow my directions and follow them well”

”Yes, I'll do my best”

Like that, Koutarou and the others began understanding Darkness Rainbow and their goal, and that was a hint at what the magical girls from Darkness Rainbow were doing.

“In that case, then their target is without a doubt the magical power in this room. They're gathering power to overthrow Folsaria after all”

That was the conclusion Koutarou reached. In preparation for their decisive battle, Darkness Rainbow was trying to steal the magical power pooled in room 106. Everything made sense if one imagined that they kidnapped the children as a means to obtain it.

“Koutarou, I think the situation is a little more serious”

”What do you mean?”

“They're using something that stands out like serial kidnapping. They are probably going to challenge Rainbow Heart to the decisive battle after this mission is over”

Kiriha felt that this situation was more serious than Koutarou thought it was. Up until now, the magicians had been keeping low in order not to stand out. They left no clues behind, if possible, erased the memories of those involved and cast a ward to keep people away. Their stance was that 'magicians don't exist'.

However, this time things were different. They had chosen to kidnap several children, something that horribly stood out. This would create a major incident, and a detailed investigation by the police would be performed, making it harder for Darkness Rainbow to act in this town in the future.

The only way they would chose to do something like that was if they were never going to make a move in this city again. In other words, it was likely that the decisive battle with Rainbow Heart was close.

“Looking at it from a strategical level, the even more troublesome part is that the enemy doesn't seem to have taken the outcome here into consideration”

Theia folded her arms with a strict expression. In the eyes of a genius at battle, there was also a different problem.

“They haven't taken the outcome into consideration? You mean they don't need to win against us?”

“That's right. Since there's no strategy that can guarantee victory 100%, any commander usually thinks of the scenario of what to do when they lose. In that case, the serial kidnapping becomes a problem”

”I see! Since they've been doing kidnappings, they can't retry this battle!”

If they raised the entire cities level of alert, they wouldn't be able to fully deceive the locals, even with magic. Even if they erased the memories of the witnesses, if people with memory loss showed up frequently, they would eventually have some kind of suspicion directed their way.

“Yes, in other words, the enemy should be thinking of it like this. There's no need to make any more moves in this city. It doesn't matter if we lose”

This idea derived by Kiriha and Theia would become a very important guideline when deciding on their policy. However, there was still one problem with this way of thinking. Having noticed that, Harumi raised her hand, asking for permission to speak.

“Please wait, Theiamillis-san. Weren't Darkness Rainbow targeting room 106 so they could fight against Rainbow Heart?”

“That's right. They're surely hoping everything goes well here”

”They don't have to steal it?”

“They already have a replacement after all. There's no need to be so persistent with this place”

”A replacement?”

Since it didn't make sense to Harumi, she tilted her head in confusion. There, Clan adjusted her glasses and explained it to her.

“Harumi, the underground's radical faction shared spiritual energy technology with them”

“Ah”

Harumi's eyes opened wide. She had finally understood what Darkness Rainbow was thinking.

“The magicians should have obtained the technology to use spiritual energy, and weaponry made using that. They are most likely planning on using that to make up for their lack of numbers”

Clan shrugged, as if saying that the situation was bad.

“Hey, Theia-chan, I don't really get it but...”

Next, Shizuka raised her hand. She understood what Darkness Rainbow was thinking, but that confused her even more.

“If they think it's fine to lose, why even bother attacking? Can't they just leave us be?”

Shizuka wondered why Darkness Rainbow would attack even though they had gotten what they needed from the radical faction.

If they have enough combat potential, there should be no point in attacking room 106.

“Thinking about it normally, it could be a diversion or they're trying to buy time. Kiriha, what do you think?”

“Maybe while Darkness Rainbow attacks room 106, Maya and Elexis scheme in the background?”

“Now that you mention it, Maya and Elexis vanished before the battle underground was settled, Your Highness”

“That's ominous. Those two might do something unpredictable”

Maya and Elexis were ominous existences for Koutarou and the others. While it looked like they were working with the underground radical faction and Darkness Rainbow at first glance, their true goal was uncertain. Elexis was especially ominous, and nobody knew what exactly he was up to. As a result, Koutarou and the others had to constantly worry about something happening in the background, and what Maya and Elexis were doing. Koutarou and the others instinctively fell silent and found themselves asking a question without answer.

“...Nothing will start from thinking about those wicked two. Let's limit ourselves to Darkness Rainbow”

The meeting had fallen silent, so Clan tried to put the discussion around those two on hold for now and return the topic to Darkness Rainbow.

“That sounds convincing considering you're used to be even more wicked”

Koutarou laughed as he poked fun at Clan. In response, she angrily furrowed her brows.

“Bertorion!! Why are you always only mean to me!? Why can't you be kinder to me like you are with all the others!?”

Clan spoke in a strong tone, as if she was about to bite Koutarou. However, Koutarou didn't flinch in front of her, and instead laughed as always.

“That wasn't being mean. I said 'used to be'”

“Ugh... a-ahem, leaving that aside. Back to Darkness Rainbow!”

“Yes, Darkness Rainbow”

“...U-Ugh...”

“By the way, that was being mean”

”I get that!!”

Koutarou's and Clan's casual conversation brought a cheerful tone back to everyone's voices. The stiff atmosphere that had come from discussing Maya and Elexis had been completely blown away. Kiriha seemed the most amused by Koutarou and Clan, but laughing for a moment she returned to her serious expression.

“Now then, if we are to total everything up, Darkness Rainbow is planning on attacking room 106, but don't attach much importance to it. They are hoping to claim the magical power if all goes well, but it is most likely a feint or a ploy to buy time. Therefore, the chances of them running away when the time comes is high. They

can't lose talent that would have adverse effects on the decisive battle that is to come from this”

Darkness Rainbow would like to feint their enemy or buy time without any losses. That being the case, the entire operation would be very defensive, and they would be prepared to retreat should the time come.

“Escaping, huh... in an anime or something, there would be a secret base in a mountain, and they would have a secret passage or a helicopter for escape ready”

Listening to Kiriha, Sanae didn't think too much about it and displayed the knowledge she had gotten from watching anime. Normally someone would get angry at her and tell her to take it seriously, but they were going up against a group of magical girls. What Sanae had said wasn't impossible.

“Now that I think about it... Nana-san told me something. A ritual that uses ten children would require a really large indoor space”

Yurika added another condition on the board. When it came to ritual magic, the scale of the spell, the size of the magic circle and the required energy was proportionally related. As a result, if the ten missing children were going to be used as energy, they would need an equally large area.

“So that means that they might be in the mountains like Sanae-sama said. There's no area that wide in the urban area after all”

Ruth formed that conclusion as she brought up the map on her bracelet. The magic circle Maya had used eleven years ago had been the size of a parking lot. Since that was a magic circle for one, the size for ten should be on the level of a gym, even when accounting

for improvements in techniques. Occupying a facility like that in town would be difficult, and as such, they should be in a more secluded area.

“Abandoned commercial facilities and unused tunnels in the mountains would be good candidates”

“I met with Crimson at the edge of town, so there's a good chance of that”

Maki had met Crimson at the edge of town as she was chasing after the missing children. Thinking of why Crimson would be there, it was likely that the ritual was going to take place in a facility nearby.

“Alright Ruth. Gather up those candidates”

”As you wish, my princess”

Ruth didn't just use her map data, but also the Blue Knight's unmanned scouts to narrow down the potential candidates of the ritual site. As they waited for the results, Shizuka asked something that had been on her mind this entire time.

“By the way, what kind of ritual is it?”

She was wondering about the ritual itself. It seemed pretty clear that Darkness Rainbow would use a ritual but she had no idea what they would use it for. Shizuka was a complete amateur when it came to magic, and she couldn't even imagine it.

“I believe they will either attack us with it, create weapons or summon demons”

Being an expert, Maki came up with three possible uses. Eleven years ago, Maya had done so to accumulate magic, but it was hard to imagine that Darkness Rainbow would do that with all ten children.

“Are you sure?”

”Yes”

Koutarou made sure with Maki and she responded with a serious nod. Her expression made Koutarou feel sad and restless.

“...That's what I would have done”

Maki had once been part of Darkness Rainbow, that's why she knew how they acted, and could imagine what they'd do. While she hadn't used humans as an energy source, she had used ritual magic herself. Something she regretted now.

PART 2

Koutarou's and the others imagination had been spot on. Darkness Rainbow was trying to use their ritual in the large basement of an abandoned mansion on the edge of the city. Darkness Rainbow had erased the memories of many building owners, and this was one of them.

“...Blue-san, how is it going?”

”It's activating properly. It's rapidly absorbing the life force from the flowers”

After seeing Crimson, who had gone to save Maki, off, Dark Green and Dark Blue continued their work on the magic circle. Just a while

ago it had been completed and the two were currently testing it. They left a bouquet in the center of the circle and activated the ritual, and the flowers wilted before them. The life force and spiritual energy was being deprived of them by the spell.

“The spiritual energy capacity is functioning normally, same with the converter. There are no problems”

“That's good. Then we can go ahead as planned”

In a few seconds the bouquet had completely wilted away, turning into dried flowers. The ten children would be drained the same way and be used as an energy source for the ritual.

“It's still too early to be relieved. This is where you come in”

”That's right. I'll do my best”

Why had Crimson and Green taken Blue with them? The answer was in the type of magic that Blue specialized in. She was skilled at summoning magic. Using magical power to bend space-time, summon objects and creatures from afar, or sending them away. The large-scale ritual they were going to cast was actually a summoning spell.

Koutarou and the others were strong. However, they had one obvious weak spot. That was that there were only nine of them. Even if they used their captive Maki as well, that was still just ten. If they attacked more than ten places, they wouldn't be able to cover them all. For that sake, they had to summon ten demons, and that's why they had kidnapped ten children. While Koutarou and the others were dealing with the demons, they could carefreely go and occupy room 106 and its magical power.

“I'll bring the children over. Blue-san, you begin on preparations please”

”I understand. I'll leave the children to you”

The ritual should take about three hours. Since this was a ritual that took a lot of time, various preparations were necessary. Not only did tools need to be prepared, but since they couldn't eat or drink for three hours, they'd need to do so beforehand. Since this took a lot of time and physical strength, it was a difficult role.

“Oh?”

Green was headed towards the corner where the children had been caged, but she stopped halfway there and looked at the passage that lead to the surface.

“What is it?”

”It looks like Crimson is back”

Being specialized in fortune telling, Green wasn't just good at future forecasts, but at information gathering as well. She had cast a surveillance network on the entire building, and she could detect anyone approaching. That surveillance network had caught Crimson.

“But that's strange. She's walking so slowly...”

Eventually Crimson got close enough to not only be sensed, but to be visualized as well. In that moment, Green's expression completely changed.

“Oh no, Crimson is badly hurt!! Blue-san, you come too!!”

”Yes!!”

The two were supposed to continue their ritual spell, but upon learning that Crimson was hurt, they stopped their preparations and headed towards Crimson.

PART 3

Because Crimson had been caught up in an explosion spell, she looked a lot more hurt than she was. As a result, once Blue used the magical power she got from draining the life of the bouquet to heal Crimson, she could move like normal.

“Thanks, Blue. I'd never been able to hold my head up high again if I'd been forced to retire before the operation even began because of my own spell”

“Your own spell!? You mean you used your Explosion spell on yourself!?”

“Crimson what happened? What about Navy-san?”

Crimson had left to save Navy, and now she came back injured and alone. Moreover, she had used her Explosion in a way that it hit her as well. Blue and Green had no idea what had happened.

“...I fought against Maki”

”With Navy-san!? Why!?”

“Maki has been completely brainwashed by those guys. So when I went over to save her, she attacked me. It was a trap”

“Brainwash... that Navy-san was...”

“I've known Maki for a long time, so I want to save her, but... I imagine it would be hard right now”

“Then why did you use Explosion on yourself?”

”Maki wiped out my memory and I used Explosion again at a weird timing. As a result it ended in a draw”

Crimson explained the circumstances to Green and Blue. However, it wasn't the truth. She didn't tell the two that Maki had betrayed Darkness Rainbow out of her own volition. If she did, Maki would be targeted as a traitor, and Crimson wanted to avoid that.

Maki, it seems like I have a surprisingly sentimental side of me...

Crimson was surprised by the fact that she hid the truth. When it came down to it, Maki's feelings of friendship, and her own feelings of wanting to fight again made her hide the facts. In other words, it meant that she wanted to meet with Maki again. However, Crimson didn't notice her own true feelings.

“At any rate, we can consider Maki to be one of the enemy magicians. If needed I will kill her”

“I'll leave that to you, Crimson”

”Green, any corrections to the plan?”

“None. I already anticipated the worst case scenario, with Navy-san being brainwashed, when I made this plan”

“Okay, then I'll return to work”

”Please do”

"..."

Crimson felt relief that the two had reacted like she expected, but she felt a little dissatisfied that neither of them held any sentiment for Maki, and she faintly imagined that this might have been why she left the organization.

PART 4

While Crimson's wounds had been healed, it hadn't restored her stamina or fixed her clothes. After taking a shower and changing clothes, she took a break to have dinner in one of the small rooms. During that time, she thought of Maki. She was happy that she had been able to fight a stronger Maki, but now that it was over she felt somewhat sad. She was now deep in thoughts as to why, but it wasn't going well. As a result, she couldn't even properly remember much of Kiriha and Koutarou whom she had been so fixated on.

As Crimson was in the middle of eating, a voice suddenly came from behind her.

"What, for someone that was hurt you seem awfully energetic"

When she turned around, she saw a girl wearing a darkened orange outfit staring at her. She was Dark Orange. She was a so called modern girl, and had the most innocent personality in Darkness Rainbow. That said, she was the most aggressive amongst them when it came to things she didn't like. Maki had called Orange a kid, and Crimson agreed.

"Orange... and Purple and Yellow too..."

"I'm glad your injuries were light"

”You think you'll be able to participate?”

Behind Orange were girls dressed in purple and yellow outfits respectively. They were Dark Purple and Dark Yellow. Purple's mental age was high and she was Darkness Rainbow's mediator. In contrast to her cute appearance, Yellow was the biggest bonehead in the organization. Once she had decided on something she refused to change her mind.

“If you're all here, that means it's time already?”

According to schedule, the three of them would show up just before the ritual summoning took place. With them appearing it meant that a lot of time had passed when Crimson was deep in thought. However, Purple shook her head.

“There's still a little more time. We came early just in case after we heard that you had been hurt”

However there was still two hours and a half before the ritual would activate. Purple had decided to show up early because she believed they should raise their level of alert since Crimson had fought against Maki. It meant that the ritual site might be found sooner than expected.

“We don't want the enemy interfering with the ritual so we've come”

”You just rest easy, Crim-chan. If the enemy really do show up you'll get your time to shine”

Purple had brought Yellow and Orange with her so the three of them could run interference. Since Maki could report her encounter

with Crimson to Rainbow Heart, Purple decided that they should move swiftly to keep the ritual from being ruined.

“Purple, what did Green say?”

”She said around 20%”

Those 20% were the chances of Rainbow Heart appearing in the basement earlier than expected. This was something that Green had forecasted.

“20%... which means I can't stay so carefree”

The figure 20% meant that Rainbow Heart would show up in one out of five of all possible futures. Adding in other accidents, the probability of trouble increased even more. So it's no wonder why Purple had hurried.

“Anyways, leave this to us while you rest up. That is your job for now, Crimson”

“Okay. I'll leave it to you, Purple”

“Good. Then this might be sudden, but we're leaving”

”See you”

“Let's meet later”

The three left Crimson behind in the room.

“So the fighting will start soon... fufu”

Crimson had been lost in thought before the three appeared, but now she was dancing as she thought of her next battle. While she

wouldn't deny her sentimental feelings, fighting was everything to her. That's why she couldn't hold hands with Maki. It was unfortunate for Maki that Crimson was a prodigy at fighting.

PART 5

Koutarou and the others adhered to the policy they decided on during their meeting and searched for the kidnapped children. They had two leads to assist in their search. The ritual required a large space, and the place where Maki had run into Crimson.

There were many large buildings that had been constructed during the economic growth bubble in Kitsushouharukaze city, which had been abandoned during the recession after the bubble burst. Two such buildings existed in the outskirts of the city where Maki had encountered Crimson.

The first was a closed down shopping mall. Construction had begun relying on an expressway being built and open to public, but once the bubble burst the plans for the expressway were reconsidered. However since construction on the mall had already begun, plans could not be reconsidered and the mall was opened for business. However, without the expressway the mall was in an inconvenient place, and once the opening hype died down, management failed within a few years. As a result, only the shell of a concrete building built to last a hundred years remained.

The second was a resort hotel. This opened during the economic growth bubble, and the building was already over 50 years old. However, while it had been the largest facility when it opened for business, it was now an ordinary size, and combined with the aging building, the number of guests steadily dropped over the years, and it finally closed down a few years ago.

Both the shopping mall and resort hotel had large spaces which were perfect for ritual magic. However, they didn't have the time to search each place in turn. So Koutarou and the others split into two teams of five.

Yurika and Maki took the lead of one team each. Since this was a magic related incident, it was only natural for these two, well versed in magic, to take the lead. Yurika's team consisted of Harumi, Kiriha, Shizuka and Clan. While Maki had Koutarou, Sanae, Theia and Ruth. The teams had been split up with a good balance in mind.

If there was any problems with this plan it was that there would be no one defending room 106, but since children's' lives were at stake, stopping the ritual was the top priority, moreover, Darkness Rainbow should be waiting for the ritual to complete before they attack. It would also take some time to control the magical power in room 106. So leaving Kiriha's subordinates and unmanned fighters from the Blue Knight was deemed to be good enough. It wouldn't be that hard for Koutarou and the others to get back to room 106 before control of the magical power was seized. Right now, taking a few risks was worth it to save the lives of the children.

PART 6

Tension was high before they departed. The most nervous one amongst them was Yurika. While she had been a leader in a battle before, this was the first time in real command. It was a completely different situation from doing what she had been told like before.

“Sanae-chan, do you think I'll be good enough as the commander?”

Anxious, Yurika asked Sanae, whom she spent a lot of time together with, for her opinion. If possible, she wanted Sanae to object so she could trade places with someone else.

“I'm sure you'll be fine”

However, betraying her hopes, Sanae agreed with Yurika being the leader.

“I don't believe it”

“It'll all work out”

Being bad at explaining, Sanae didn't say why she agreed, but she had a proper reason for it. Sanae had only been able to return to her body because of Yurika's desperate struggles. She had no reason not to trust Yurika. While Yurika was normally useless, she was someone that pulled through when she had to, and Sanae knew that.

“That's so irresponsible”

”You don't have to worry. Harumi and Kiriha are with you for that sake. If you don't get something then you can think of them as me and rely on them”

”Okay, I'll try my best!”

”Yes, very good”

In the end, Yurika decided doing her best at being a leader. Her sense of duty towards combating Darkness Rainbow was strong, even more so with Nana here. Because of that, her resolution came faster than normal.

“...It looks like that side will be fine”

Koutarou had been the one to push for Yurika as leader. He had been a little uneasy but Yurika was awfully reliable in situations like this. If she was surrounded with people that can follow up for her, results should automatically follow.

“Satomi-kun, I'm no Yurika, but... are you fine with us as leaders?”

Unlike Koutarou who seemed satisfied, Maki was somewhat hesitant. She didn't think she was suitable as a leader either, but for a different reason from Yurika's.

“Why do you think that?”

“I am part of your band of knights. My life is in your hands. That's why you should be the one in command, Satomi-kun”

Maki spoke to Koutarou with her hand on her chest. She had absolute faith in him. If he ordered her, she would tear her own heart out of her chest and give it to him.

“If you say your life is mine, I should be allowed to do as I please right? You'll be fine as the leader, Aika-san. We need to hurry”

If Koutarou was the leader, he would constantly need to check with Maki, which would delay everything. Letting Maki and Yurika be leaders would allow them to omit a lot of explanations.

“But I used to be your enemy, Satomi-kun! I'm not suitable to take command in this kind of situation”

Everyone knew that Maki used to be part of Darkness Rainbow. Letting someone that used to be your enemy lead you was

something that normally never happened. It would affect the morale of the troops, and there were big problems when it came to reliability. However, Theia who was listening in smiled wryly.

“Maki, if you'll go by that logic, nobody here is worthy of taking command. Or would you rather Harumi and Shizuka do it?”

Out of the nine girls here, only a minority haven't been hostile towards Koutarou. Apart from Harumi and Shizuka, everyone else had more or less been enemies. Therefore, no one but Harumi and Shizuka would be allowed to command. However, it was quite clear that neither of them were suited for it. It was unrealistic.

“That's...”

“It's the other way around, Theia, Aika-san”

However, Koutarou shook his head with a slight wry smile.

“Eh?”

“What do you mean?”

“...Fighting doesn't suit anyone of you. If it wasn't an emergency, I wouldn't want anyone of you being a commander. It'll always be a last resort”

Everyone were the same to Koutarou. But they were in a situation where every second mattered, and knowledge of magic was necessary. As always, Koutarou didn't want to let anyone fight.

“Besides, I believe in Aika-san who prays that my future is a happy one”

On the day that Maki annulled the magical bond with Koutarou, she had said that and decided to walk alongside Koutarou, casting aside her lonely life. Koutarou believed in the words and smile Maki had shown that day. He believed that she would always be on his side.

“...I am always praying, that you, and the many around you will have a happy future...”

Maki knew that many people would be needed for Koutarou to be happy. Starting with Kenji and his classmates, the people in the shopping district and of course their children. In order for humans to live happily they mutually required many people. That's why Maki prayed not just for Koutarou's future, but for many others as well.

“What, then there's no problem at all”

Seeing Maki's reaction, Theia blinked repeatedly. She couldn't understand the reason why Maki was worried.

“Don't say that, Theia. Aika-san hasn't spent a year and a half fooling around with us like you”

“Then it's only a matter of time”

“That's about right”

Based on Koutarou's and Theia's words and behavior, Maki finally realized that the people around her prayed just like her. And because of that she was being accepted.

“Satomi-kun, Theia-san... thank you for believing in me”

She was so happy tears were overflowing, but now was the time to depart for battle. Maki endured those feelings and tightly grasped her cane.

By the Remains of the Dream

PART 1

Tuesday, September 14

Koutarou and the others left room 106 just after the date changed. Normally, the room was guarded through many means, but going up against Darkness Rainbow, they set up an even more careful defense. They couldn't move until Kiriha's subordinates and the unmanned fighters got in position. As a result, it took some time before they could leave, but now they could move freely. Koutarou and the others split up into their two groups and headed towards their destination.

Koutarou was on team Maki. Apart from him and Maki, Sanae, Theia and Ruth were also in the team. Their destination was the abandoned shopping mall. There was a pavement road that lead to the mall, but if the mall was being used as the ritual site, the road was definitely being monitored. Working with that as their primary assumption they were proceeding to the mall in the woods by the side of the road.

“How does it look, Ruth”

”There are no reactions on the thermal sensor. There seems to be no large living creatures in the effective range of the sensor”

Koutarou and the others were now close to the shopping mall. They lurked over and observed the mall. Up until now they hadn't run into any problems. There hadn't been anything that could be interpreted as monitoring. That was only obvious as they were still more than 300 meters away from the mall, and monitoring all of the surroundings was unrealistic. The road was most likely the only

thing being monitored outside of the mall. The problem was from this point forward.

“There are some reactions on the sonic sensor”

”The enemy?”

“It's in the middle of the mountain. It could just be some wild animals. According to a more detailed analysis there doesn't seem to be any active movements”

They began by having an unmanned scout survey from the sky. Fortunately there were no enemies that could be seen, and they believed infiltrating wouldn't be too difficult. Next, they needed to investigate using magic. Since this might be a base for magicians, they should have put up a surveillance net using magic, and of course, the magic investigation was Maki's job.

“Maki, how does it look with magic?”

“There are no magic reactions on the outside”

Maki searched for all kinds of spells she could detect. However, she couldn't sense gathered magical power, all she could sense was the weak magical power being emitted from the surroundings.

“Maybe they're not here”

Sanae tilted her head. There were no signs of Darkness Rainbow casting any ritual magic here. They might be at the resort hotel that Yurika and the others headed towards, or they could both be duds. Sanae couldn't see any traces of aura in the area she could see, and she began suspecting that Darkness Rainbow might not be here.

“It wouldn't be easy to monitor something this big even with magic”

“You're right. It's still too early to jump to conclusions. Putting up surveillance where intruders have to pass is only obvious. The enemy doesn't have enough time to put up a surveillance network to watch for enemies in all possible directions”

“So we should be able to get into the mall without problems then?”

Koutarou wrapped up the discussion and the four girls with him nodded with serious expressions. While they couldn't see anything now, that didn't mean the enemy wasn't here. Koutarou and the others used magic and machinery to hide their presence and carefully approached the mall.

PART 2

At the same time, Yurika and the others arrived at their destination. Their destination was the shutdown resort hotel. While the building itself was smaller than the shopping mall, it surpassed the mall in height, and it was hard to tell how far it reached underground. Moreover, since it was situated in an open area with good view, it would be difficult to approach.

“So what do we do now, Yurika-chan?”

Shizuka asked the commander, Yurika, for the strategy from now on. Team Yurika consisted of Yurika, Harumi, Kiriha, Shizuka and Clan. Just like team Maki, they were hiding before the hotel and observing the situation.

“We're going in. I kinda feel some magical power, so I'd like to enter to confirm it”

“I feel the same way”

Something different from team Maki's situation was that Yurika and Harumi could already sense magical power. They were barely able to perceive it, at the edge of their senses. However, they still couldn't determine that this was the ritual site. They were up against Darkness Rainbow. They had contended against Rainbow Heart for several hundred years, and feints and diversions like this was a daily occurrence. Tossing in a dummy filled with magical power into a building that fit the bill was an old trick.

“To begin with, let's tell the others that we can sense magic”

Clan operated her bracelet and sent a short message to Ruth. Real-time information exchange was Clan's and Ruth's job.

“The problem is how do we enter. There are very few places to infiltrate from”

Kiriha showed a severe expression. Because of what it was, the resort hotel was built in a place with a great view. That's why surveying the area from two or three places on a floor high up was enough to get a good view of the entire area around the hotel. Contrary to its looks, the resort hotel was hard to attack.

“What do we do?”

Yurika quickly gave up thinking for herself and asked the group for their opinion. She was aware that in situations like these, her own ideas usually didn't work out so well.

“If we assume that the hotel is being surveyed from one of the upper floors, we should aim to infiltrate from the northern side by the import road”

The windows in the hotel were pointed towards the south. The site was also wider on that side, making the view better. As a result, the northern side was more narrow, and had less focus on view, leaving them with plenty of places to hide. Moreover, observing the northern side from above was more difficult because of the tighter angle.

“But Kurano-san, won't they be expecting that?”

Harumi was worried that anyone would realize that the area surrounding the roads would make it easier to infiltrate. While it was easy to infiltrate, it was so narrow that it was easy to defend. Some countermeasures would be enough to prevent infiltration.

“Which means we need to choose between an easy way in through the import road that's more likely to be guarded, or the front, which is the harder way in but less likely to be guarded”

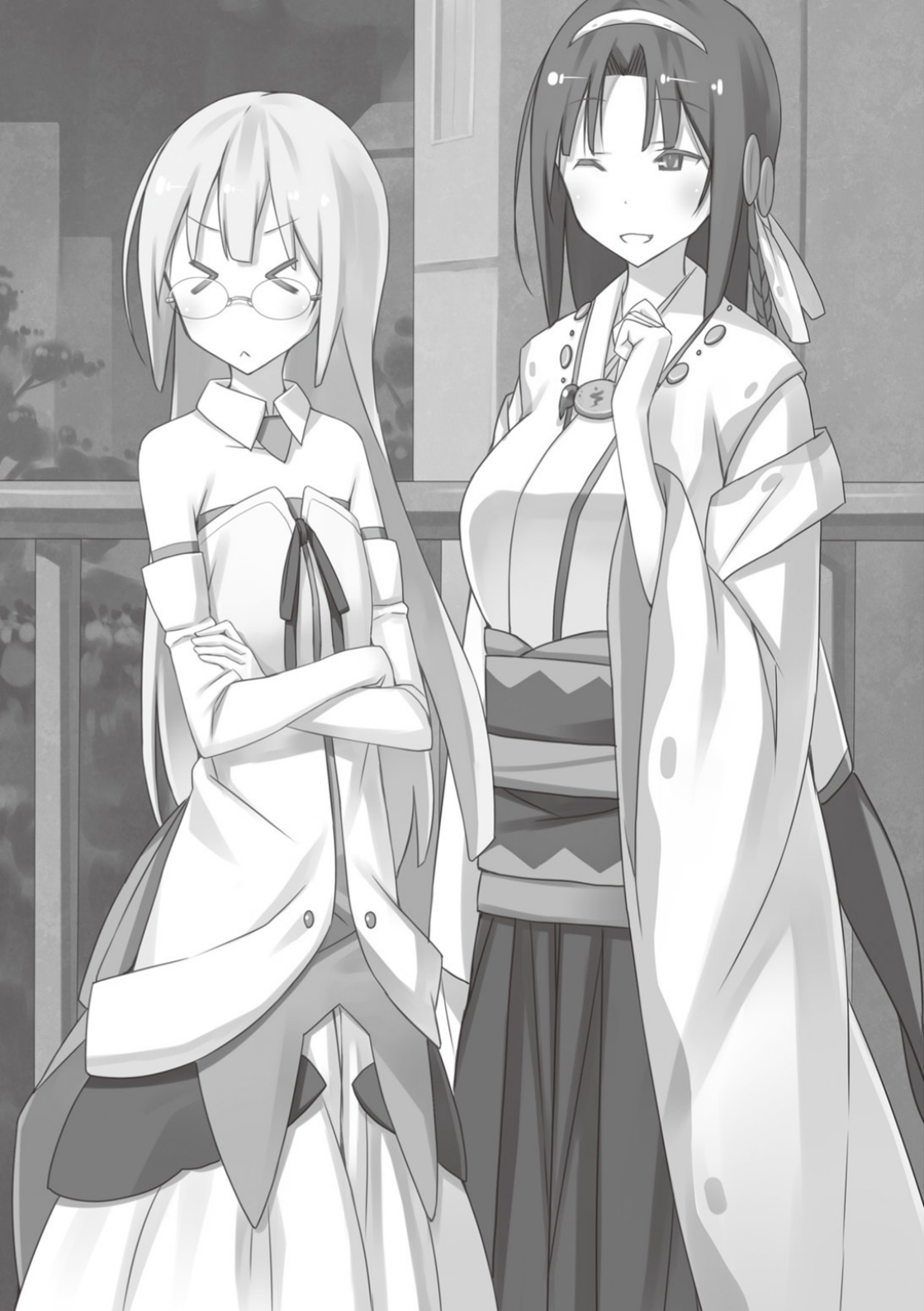
Shizuka summarized the problem into two points, both of which had risks that couldn't be ignored.

“I'd like to go through the front”

Shizuka personally preferred the simple and straight-forward way of going through the front.

”I would like to go in through the back”

The careful Clan preferred the import road in the back. Reacting to Clan's muttering, Kiriha showed an innocent smile.



“Because the north side is dark and gloomy?”

“Kii!? I'll punch you, you know! ...it's because the distance is short. Either way, we'll need to hide ourselves someway, right?”

”What should we do, Yurika-san?”

”Uhm...”

Yurika showed a troubled expression when she began thinking as Kiriha urged her for a decision. There were risks either way, and in that case she needed to ascertain which risks were more convenient for them.

What I need to prioritize the most is... that’s right, the children! When we leave with the children, the safer the better

After thinking for a while, Yurika made her decision.

“Let's go with the import road”

“Because it's dark and gloomy?”

”Kii!”

“Ahaha... no, but after we rescue the children, I think we'll escape using the same route we came. In that case, it's better to be close to a safe place”

Yurika valued the children's' safety most of all.

Imagining what would happen after they infiltrated the hotel, there was a high chance that they would escape with the children in

hand. If they find the children before Darkness Rainbow, they would avoid battle. That would also ruin the ritual.

And after rescuing the children and escaping, it was more ideal the sooner they could get picked up by the Cradle or Hazy Moon. That would only be possible outside of the resort hotel. That's why using the import road, the children wouldn't have to move as far. Yurika believed that in terms of time and distance, it had the least risk for the children.

“Aha, so you properly put some thought into it after all, Yurika-chan”

Shizuka showed a cheerful smile and gave Yurika a slap on the back. The way Yurika prioritized the children first fit well with Shizuka's senses. The reason for that was because she had lost her own parents at their place of lodging. It was only a natural reaction considering this was a resort hotel.

“Harumi, Kii, what do you two think?”

”I think we should do what Yurika-san says. I think the safer the children are the better”

Harumi agreed with Yurika. Because she had gotten along so well with the children at the hospital, she couldn't see this as someone else's problem. She wanted to prioritize the children's' over her own.

“My answer is already decided. I will save them just like I was saved eleven years ago”

Kiriha smiled at Clan. In the past, she had been saved by Koutarou and Clan. Koutarou had desperately struggled between who to

save, his mother or Kiriha, and in the end he chose Kiriha. So there was no way she could abandon these children.

“How about you, Clan-dono?”

Kiriha's tone turned into a more mischievous one. It was the same smile that had appeared on the lips of the young girl Clan had met in the world eleven years ago into the past.

“I-I have no objections. Saving the weak and crushing the wicked. That's the path of a Forthorthe princess”

With gratitude and goodwill clearly directed towards her, Clan blushed furiously and she turned away in an attempt to hide her red cheeks.

“Everyone is in agreement, Captain Yurika”

Shizuka reported to Yurika, and the other three nodded in unison.

“Then let's infiltrate from the import road in the back. Everyone, let's move”

Yurika returned the nod with a strong resolve not to let down her friends expectations. While Koutarou might not like it, everyone would admit Yurika was now a splendid magical girl.

“The princess of love and courage Ho-!”

”You're being surprisingly captain like Ho-!”

This might have been the moment Yurika became the true leader of this team.

PART 3

The inside of the shopping mall was silent. Ruth had mentioned sound coming from inside, but that sound still wasn't reaching Koutarou's and the others ears. This was obvious, as the shopping mall was too large.

“Aika-san, you can tell right?”

“Yes, I can feel weak magical power over a wide area”

But ever since they entered the mall, Koutarou and Maki had sensed magical power. The amount was minute, perhaps because of the distance, but there was no doubt that magic had been used here.

“Ruth, how about that sound?”

“It's still continuing. It also seems like the source of the sound is moving”

Another benefit of having entered the shopping mall, Ruth's information gathering was now more accurate, and more detailed information could be gathered.

“This is all widely spread out, maybe even over the entire mall”

“Hey everyone, stop. This might be bad”

Sanae stopped the group with a rarely seen serious expression on her face. She then looked right to left. There were concrete walls in the way of both directions, however, her glance passed through those and she was looking further beyond.

“What is it?”

“Evil spirits are walking all over the place. And it's not just one or two, but a lot of them”

Sanae could see a lot of spiritual energy. They were vague and dark, clearly distinct from people and normal spirits. Those spiritual energies were walking disorderly, and not very fast either. That's why Sanae believed they were evil spirits.

“Maybe the sound and magical power are from them?”

”Satomi-kun, I think so too”

“I believe there is a high chance of that”

”One of them will appear from around that corner soon”

”Alright, everyone, let's hide in that shop. I want to get a good look at that evil spirit”

”An evil spirit, huh... I don't have any pleasant memories of those...”

Koutarou and the others jumped into a nearby shop, and hid behind the display shelves and tables that had been left behind. They wanted to confirm what kind of evil spirit Sanae was seeing. It was possible that it was a demon summoned by the ritual.

“The sound is getting closer. It looks like the evil spirits are indeed the source for the sound”

“It'll get here in five seconds or so... three, two, one...”

“So that's it”

”It looks like a normal person, but... is that the evil spirit?”

A single human appeared in front of Koutarou and the others. The person was slightly hunched over and was moving slow, but it didn't look like anything but a normal person.

“Your Highness, Master, this is strange”

“What is it?”

“There's no reaction on the thermal sensor”

“What does that mean?”

”Master, that person has the same temperature as the surroundings”

“What!?”

Ruth continued gathering information through various means, including through a thermal sensor. However, even though they had a human in front of them, there was no reaction on the thermal sensor. In other words, as long as the thermal sensor wasn't malfunctioning, the human in question had the same temperature the surroundings did.

“Satomi-kun, I've got it. That is probably a zombie”

“A zombie!? You mean those? The walking corpses in movies!? ”

“Yes... Darkness Rainbow has someone who is skilled at creating them. Purple is probably here”

Maki bit her lip as she spoke.

“Is she that dangerous? That Purple person?”

“Yes. She's someone I definitely don't want to fight against”

In Darkness Rainbow, when it came to pure fighting prowess, Crimson was number one. However, if they were to actually fight, there is someone that could win against Crimson. That was Purple. She was a magical girl skilled at necromancy, and always took a large amount of dead with her. Alone, Purple couldn't beat Crimson, but if the dead were included, she would be the victor. She was the strongest in Darkness Rainbow, the necromancer of nightmares, Dark Purple. Zombies were one of the types of dead she had the most of.

“Maki-san, how many of those zombies could she control at the same time?”

”There's a limit to Purple's abilities, but the weaker something is, the more she can control. Though I don't think there could be more than a hundred”

Purple had a constant total amount of magical power, and the strength of the dead was determined by how much she divided her power. One would be incredibly difficult to deal with, but a hundred would be weaker than humans. Since Purple could freely control the numbers, the strength of the dead would differ from one time to the next. The reason why Purple was so feared was because she was so adept at choosing the right numbers for the right time.

“Master, this is bad”

Ruth's expression grew more severe upon learning of Purple's power.

“Because of the zombies I can't determine the location of the ritual. I can't complete my investigation until we defeat all of them”

Because of the zombies moving around, sounds were coming from all over the place. That's why it was impossible to find the site of the ritual through the sonic or vibration sensor. The thermal sensor wouldn't work because of the many walls all over. All they could do was eliminate the zombies.

“So that's it... Aika-san, what about your magic?”

”Ritual magic releases powerful magical power, but there are spells to keep that from leaking outside. If that's been cast, I don't think I could tell it apart from the magical power from these zombies. Or rather, since this is Purple, she probably has the same amount of magical power leaking out from these zombies that the ritual would release”

Magic was the same as sound and vibration. Maki's intuition told her that Purple would have released these zombies with the magical power from the ritual in mind. As expected, it was impossible to detect the magic circle from the zombies, and all they could do was defeat them one at a time. By letting the zombies wander all over the mall, Purple was protecting the magic circle.

“I think the most troublesome scenario would be if the magic circle is on Yurika's end”

“Because we can't leave until we defeat all the zombies here”

The worst possible scenario would be if this entire shopping mall was a diversion. Koutarou and the others would be stuck here from the powers of just one person.

“Theia, it's your turn”

”I know! I'm raring to go!”

“Everyone, we're defeating the zombies. There's no need to hold back. Speed is everything!”

””Yeah!””

Koutarou and the others responded in harmony to Maki's orders. The morale was high, and fortunately, they had Theia with them. They should be able to disperse the zombies faster than Purple would expect.

PART 4

Before Koutarou and the others attacked the zombies, they contacted Yurika's group. Once they attacked the zombies, the enemy would find out what they were up to. If that happened, their defenses on Yurika's end would probably get reinforced as well. For that sake, they needed to match the timing with Yurika and the others. Truth be, they didn't want to attack until team Yurika found the enemy, but because of the time limit, they couldn't do that. At most they could match the timing of their attacks.

“We've got a message from Bertorion and the others. They've found enemies, and they want to attack depending on our situation. What will you do, Yurika?”

“I'm sure Satomi-san and the others want to hurry, but they'll have to wait until we infiltrate from the import road. It shouldn't take more than five minutes”

“I understand. I'll respond like that”

Yurika and the others were right next to the import road leading to the back of the resort hotel. The import road was already the most obvious place that would be guarded, if the enemy is here that is, so if Koutarou and the others began their attack, this was the first place that would be reinforced. Since Yurika and Harumi could already sense magical power coming from inside the hotel, they wanted the others to wait with their attack for a little.

Kiriha was being cautious since she couldn't read her enemies intentions, but they were in a situation where there was no use thinking about it. She chased her thoughts out from her head and focused on the situation at hand.

“It's okay, Yurika”

”Okay. Let's go everyone”

Yurika and the others left their hiding place and carefully approached the import road. The method of infiltration had already been decided. Darkness Rainbow were skilled at magic, so using magic to hide was risky. Instead, they would conceal themselves using Clan's and Kiriha's technology. Clan's multi purpose camouflage shut out heat, light and electromagnetic radiation. So as long as Kiriha's haniwas could conceal their spiritual energy, the chances of them being found should be low. However, they had no way to cover up sound, so the camouflage was not perfect. Besides, they were going up against elite magicians. Even if it was in the middle of the night, they needed to be careful.

“Uhh, I'm so nervous...”

When the group reached the import road, Shizuka instinctively sighed. She disliked hiding or running away. She could handle on her own in a fight, but in stealth action like this, there was nothing

she could do. She couldn't relax in a situation where they'd be out of the enemy who paid extra attention to their surroundings.

“Just endure a little longer. Just keep it up until we get inside”

Originally they'd want to stay hidden the entire time, but with zombies protecting the mall, the situation was different, and it would be difficult to stay hidden. It wasn't hard to imagine that team Yurika would be found shortly after team Maki launch their attack. In that case, they at least needed to get past the import road.

“Sakuraba-senpai, you're awfully calm”

”I've always been more passive after all”

The girls encouraged and supported each other as they walked down the import road. The enemy shouldn't be able to see them, and they weren't using magic so they shouldn't be able to sense any magical power either. But even then, the girls were anxious. They couldn't shake the worries that they might be heard. In the end it was just like Koutarou said. Being good at fighting didn't equal being suited for it.

The next few seconds were a trial for the girls. This was what it was like to feel more dead than alive. However, they were eventually done, and the girls reached the hotel's back door.

“Pheeew... I thought I was going to drop dead...”

Shizuka leaned against the hotel wall and showed a weak smile. She was stronger than anyone else in a fight, but she was still just a normal girl. She was weak to this kind of tension.

“Shizuka-san, it's still too early to feel relieved. We need to get through this door first...”

Yurika was already standing by the backdoor, and she was thinking of how she should open it. Looking at Yurika like that, Shizuka felt that this must be what a magical girl was. She also felt like she understood exactly why Koutarou didn't want Yurika to look like this.

“We'll open it Ho-!”

“We're good at detailed work Ho-!”

The two haniwas came up to Yurika. They were both grasping tools for precise work in their hands. They would open the lock with those.

“No, I'll melt the lock with acid and break through”

However, Yurika shook her head and held her cane.

“That's pretty forceful for Yurika Ho-!”

”Are you sure you should be so violent Ho?”

”Either way, once we get inside Satomi-san and the others will start fighting. That's why I think we shouldn't waste any time. Clan-san, please contact Satomi-san”

“Understood”

After confirming that Clan had begun operating her bracelet, Yurika started her incantation.

“Acid Splash!”

It was a spell to create a strong acid. She knew that it wasn't very magical girl like but she was getting more and more adept at using it. The acid sprayed from the tip of the cane towards the doors' lock.

Because the door knob and lock were metallic, they both corroded and melted when exposed to the strong acid. It looked similar to a candle melting from heat.

“Let's go!”

Yurika quietly pushed the door open. Without the doorknob and lock, the door opened with a light push. Yurika peeked through a small gap to confirm that nothing was on the other side before quickly entering. She was being quite skillful, in complete contrast to her usual self.

“When Yurika-chan is acting cool it's a little lonely”

Yurika was being magical girl-like, leader-like, as she took the lead and jumped into the hotel. Seeing that, Shizuka looked lonely, just as she had said. Shizuka had been the only one to say it, but the other three all felt the same way.

“What are you all doing! Hurry!”

That was when Yurika popped her head back outside. She was getting impatient as the rest of the group wasn't coming.

“You're right, I'm sorry. Let's go right away!”

There was no time to reflect on sentiments. The girls looked at each other and nodded before following after Yurika into the hotel.

PART 5

The first one to sense anomalies was as expected, the fortune-telling Green. In preparation of the enemy, she cast a bunch of spells out of caution, including future forecast. She swiftly reported this to her allies in the same room.

“Crimson, Blue-san, the enemy is coming”

”Are you sure?”

Crimson and Blue were in the same room as Green, but only Crimson reacted. Blue currently had her hands full with the ritual and couldn't move.

“Most of the predictions that the enemy won't show up just vanished. I think they're inside the building”

Green's future forecast allowed her to see all kinds of possible futures, letting her forecast the future with probability. If she saw ten futures, and the enemy appeared in six of those, there was a 60% chance of the enemy appearing. Because the world was uncertain, she could only see vague futures like that.

As the forecast futures turned into reality, the futures that never occurred were excluded. That's why, if the futures of the enemy not coming were to vanish at such an unnatural timing such as this, it meant that the enemy was here.

“What a bad timing to show up at. Only you and I can move right now”

Crimson clicked her tongue. Blue was in the middle of the ritual. Purple, Orange and Yellow had left to cause diversions for the

enemy, and once they're done they'll adhere to the plan and won't be returning here. Now that the enemy was here, only Crimson and Green could deal with them.

“Can you tell how many there are?”

”The highest probability is five. But there's some swinging back and forth”

”What about Maki?”

“She shouldn't be here. The futures that she is are within the accepted margin for error”

”I see...”

After confirming what she wanted to know, Crimson picked up her cane that she had left leaning next to a wall nearby. Green turned an anxious look at Crimson.

“So you're going”

”Yes. If we fight here, the ritual will be ruined”

The summoning ritual was currently one third of the way done. If interruptions got in the way here, the ritual would never complete. If they were going to fight they should avoid this place and pick somewhere closer.

“Will you be fine on your own?”

“My injuries have been healed”

“But...”

“Don't be such a worrywart. Besides, you learned your lesson last battle, didn't you? Your forecast rapidly drop in accuracy once you're included”

According to their strategy, Crimson would fight alone at first. Green would gather information from afar and support Crimson with her future forecasts. The reason they chose to fight that way was because they wanted to avoid the forecast loops.

If Green forecast her own future, the very fact that she did would distort the future. One normally couldn't perfectly copy movements one had seen. This was like speaking into a mic, broadcasting it through speakers and picking it up in the mic again. The margin of error of Green's forecasts would grow larger, and the forecast would eventually fail. In her last battle, Kiriha had seen through that weakness and defeated her. In the end, not including your own actions in the forecast would create a more accurate result. Since they didn't want to make the same mistake again, they had decided on this way of fighting.

“Even then I'm reluctant to sending you out on your own, Crimson”

”Oh? That's not something someone from Darkness Rainbow would say”

”Don't make fun of me! I just want to make this plan a success!”

Listening to Green's words, Crimson felt a strange sense of disappointment. Those feelings made her realize something.

I was expecting Green to act as Maki's replacement

Having realized that, Crimson wanted to confirm something. That's why she stopped in place and turned towards Green.

“Green”

”Yes?”

“...If I wanted to—”

—fight with you, would you be my opponent?

Crimson wanted to ask Green that, but she decided to stop mid-sentence. That question was far too different from Darkness Rainbow's way of thinking.

Thinking about it calmly, wanting to fight against powerful enemies, meant that others had to accept Crimson's methods like Maki had. Even among people who fought as their occupation, only a few of them saw fighting as everything like Crimson. In truth, Crimson was the only one in Darkness Rainbow that felt that way, and unable to wait for rivals to appear, she had Maki accept her method.

Having others accept her method wasn't very Darkness Rainbow-like. It was only possible with Maki because she had left Darkness Rainbow. It was sheer folly to ask that of one of the leaders of Darkness Rainbow that had turned her back on Maki.

“—Never mind. That's right, Green. Why did you join Darkness Rainbow?”

Instead, Crimson asked Green why she had joined Darkness Rainbow in the first place, unaware that question was yet another one not very Darkness Rainbow-like.

“Mine?”

That's why Green's eyes opened wide.

“Yes. If it's not too much, could you tell me?”

However, Green was just surprised, she wasn't rejecting it. Urged by Crimson, she explained her own circumstances.

“A long time ago... my expectation was wrong, and I lost something very precious. That's why I wanted a certain future rather than a possible one. If I know something will happen before it happens, I won't have to lose anything”

”That's not bad. I've revised my opinion of you, Green. Let's at least grab the freedom to observe the future from Rainbow Heart”

”Crimson... yes, let's do that”

There was actually something Crimson hadn't noticed. That was that unlike Maki, Green would lie. That's why she didn't understand Green's true feelings.

Green wasn't worrying for Crimson just because she was worried about the success of the mission. The truth was that she was sad that Maki had become an enemy. She didn't want Crimson to know that, so she wasn't honest with her. If anything, if she could do that, there might have been a different path for her in her life. The darkness she had fallen into was too deep.

PART 6

Koutarou and the others waited for Yurika and her group to enter the resort hotel before launching an attack on the zombies in the shopping mall. Fortunately, the zombies weren't all that strong, and

they were slow, so Koutarou and the others had the upper hand from the start.

“...Even though I understand, I can't say I like it”

“Your Highness, if possible, let's finish them with a single attack”

“Yes, let's do that”

Zombies were combat-oriented demons made from the corpses of humans. Because of that, even though they knew that they were dead, it still pained Koutarou and the others to defeat them. That's why Koutarou and the others tried to defeat them without hurting them too much, or oppositely, defeat them in a way that doesn't leave a corpse behind. If possible, they wanted them to meet a peaceful end. While mentally strong members were gathered here, they were still girls of age.

“You're thinking too hard about it, everyone. Those people are grateful for us. They are in pain by being like that”

As luck would have it, Sanae was here. She could tell what the souls of the zombies felt. Most of them were grateful of being freed from the zombification spell as they ascended. There were some who held hatred, but that hatred was directed at the person who turned them into zombies, and they weren't looking at Koutarou and the others. Because Sanae was telling the others that, their psychological load was greatly reduced.

“Koutarou, let's beat Purple for these people too”

”Yeah, you're right. We have to stop her from doing terrible things like this”

Koutarou and the others got angrier and angrier the more zombies they defeated. There was nothing more blasphemous for the dead than forcing them to fight as zombies. They would capture Purple, the person responsible for this, and have her free all of the dead. Their sense of duty was burning within them.

“But Satomi-kun, something's strange”

”I think so too”

“What's strange?”

Sanae blinked in confusion.

“Purple who made the zombies isn't attacking. Same with the other Darkness Rainbow. Why aren't they using this chance to attack?”

As they fought, Koutarou and the others felt like something was wrong. There were zombies. They were all over the shopping mall and attacking one after the other. They already numbered over 50, and if Maki was right, they had already defeated half of the zombies she could control.

While the zombies weren't very strong, there were many and they were tough. Using them as shields and casting spells from a distance was a good tactic. Yet the zombies were just being wasted as no magicians appeared. This was something normally unthinkable.

“Master, maybe this shopping mall really was a diversion”

“That might be true...”

”That said... there's no way to tell until we defeat all of the dead. That Purple is quite skilled”

”She is probably the most scary one in Darkness Rainbow right now”

In Maki's experience, Purple was the most frightening enemy. In terms of simple fighting prowess, Crimson stood out, if Maya could be included, she might be the overall strongest. However, Purple didn't have the same kind of bravery or humor that Crimson or Maya had. She was always calm, and her state of mind that attacked without mercy made Purple even more frightening. Koutarou and the others might have already fallen into Purple's trap. It probably wasn't a coincidence that she had chosen zombies to go up against teenagers. As Koutarou and the others were starting to realize that, they continued fighting.

Part 7

Having safely infiltrated the resort hotel, Yurika and the others could only move freely for a couple of seconds before they were found by the enemy. Lots of enemies were placed inside the hotel.

“Ane-san, there's a reaction to spiritual energy Ho! We'll analyze the pattern Ho!”

“Analysis complete, there's an 80% chance it's not mechanical soldiers from before”

“Not good, there's a gravitational wave reaction! Forthorthe weapons are being used!”

Having entered the hotel from the import road, Yurika and the others didn't rush to attack but instead jumped into the warehouse

connected to the entrance and observed the situation of the building. The children were the top priority and if possible they wanted to find out where they were. If that wasn't possible, they at least wanted to confirm the enemy's situation.

That's when they detected several reactions they believed belonged to the enemy. If they had carelessly attacked, they would have run across those enemies.

“So the shopping mall is being protected by zombies while this is protected by spiritual energy and Forthorthe weapons, huh...”

“What is it, Kiriha-san?”

Hearing the haniwas' and Clan's reports, Kiriha put her hand on her chin and began thinking. Wondering what was wrong, Shizuka took a look at her, but with a severe expression, Kiriha called out to Yurika.

“Yurika can you sense magical power?”

“Yes. It feels like the entire building is filled with magical power”

”So that really is it then”

”What is?”

Shizuka asked Kiriha again, and she finally turned towards her.

“The enemy should be performing the ritual in this place. The children are here”

“Really!?”

Yurika exclaimed in surprise. She then walked right up in front of Kiriha. Since this was Yurika's original duty, her reaction was completely different from normal.

“If the enemy is logical, there's no mistaking it. The zombies were placed in the shopping mall to make it look like there is magical power there. And this resort hotel already has magical power, so they're defending it without the use of magic. What do you think that means?”

Kiriha didn't state the answer outright, but Yurika figured it out right away.

“I get it! They both contain magical power and you can't tell them apart!”

”That's right. They are holding their ritual in this hotel”

If they held the ritual here and protected it using magic, the magic reaction would be too large and Yurika and the others would be able to tell from the outside. Conversely, if the shopping mall was protected by People of the Earth and Forthorthe weapons, there would be no magic reaction, and they wouldn't even need to investigate. By protecting the ritual site with weapons and the duds with magic, they spread the magical power out between the locations and forced Koutarou and the others to investigate both of them.

However, because of that, Kiriha was able to tell that this was the ritual site the moment she got inside and was able to confirm the presence of weapons.

“Kiriha-san, please give me a moment! I'll find the center of the magical power!”

Yurika got into action right away. They had the save the children no matter what. The activation of the ritual meant the death of the children, so they had no time to waste.

PART 8

As a result of Yurika's magic investigation, they figured out that the magical power was coming from the basement. The magical power was slowly increasing there. However, there still wasn't all that much magical power, definitely not enough to be ten children's worth. Which came as a huge relief to the group.

“It looks like the children haven't been fully drained yet, but based on Sanae-chan's experience, if they have a third sucked out, it might affect their lives in the long-term. We should break through, even if its by force”

”Please wait, Yurika-san! If we don't think through how we breakthrough, the enemy will surround us and we'll waste even more time!”

Yurika wanted to break through the defenses. The longer they waited the more danger the children were in. However, Harumi objected. If they just rushed for the basement they'd get surrounded and would end up using more time. They had to devise some good plan.

“Ugh... I understand. Does anyone have any ideas?”

Being the words of Harumi, whom she respected, Yurika obediently backed off. She then took some deep breaths to calm down. With the children's lives at stake and Darkness Rainbow present, Yurika realized that she had been rushing too much.

“Why don't we go through the areas with few enemies?”

Shizuka's idea was simple. They had already gotten a map of the hotel ahead of time, and they had a good idea of where the enemy was. So her idea was that they should just take the easiest route, based on distance and the enemies' position.

“A decoy wouldn't be too bad either”

Clan's idea was a decoy. Having someone act as a decoy to gather up the enemies, while the remaining four headed underground after the defenses had weakened.

“Shizuka would be a good decoy”

“I'm doing it!?”

Shizuka reeled back in surprise from Yurika's words.

“That's because you're the least likely to be hurt”

”Uhh, that's true, but...”

Since Shizuka had the powers of the Fire Dragon Emperor within her, there was no worry of a normal enemy defeating her. However, if she used those powers, she would gain weight. Shizuka feared her potential weight increase over any potential injuries.

”Alright, let’s get started right away”

“Wait a minute uncle, don't rush it! Kiriha-san, Kiriha-san, don't you have a good plan!?”

Shizuka stopped Alunaya who was getting really fired up, and turned to Kiriha with a pleading look. She couldn't allow her weight to exceed 200 kilos again.

“Well, it's not like I don't”

Kiriha nodded. She didn't care about Shizuka's weight, but she didn't want to use her as a decoy because of her combat potential, so she was thinking of a different idea”

“I don't know if it's possible or not yet however”

”Please, just tell us! We'll do it!”

Kiriha still wasn't convinced of its success, but Shizuka was crying, so she had no choice but to let the others know of her imperfect plan.

“We destroy the floor and go underground like that”

””Eeeeehhh!?””

””Hooooooooooo!?””

When Kiriha said that, the surprised voices of the four girls and the two haniwas came together in beautiful harmony.

“The problem is that the children might get caught up in it. We don't know where they are at the moment after all”

They didn't want to come across enemies, they didn't want to use a decoy. In solution to both of those problems, Kiriha suggested that they destroy the floor. By doing that the problems wouldn't occur. But if they were to destroy the floor, a large amount of debris would

come falling down. And if the children were to get caught up in it, they would likely lose their lives. If that happened, everything would have been for nothing. That's why Kiriha was unsure of the success of this plan.

“Kiriha-san, this place will be okay”

However, Yurika had an answer to her doubts.

“Are you sure?”

“Yes. Since the children are being used as sacrifice, they will be above the magic circle. This place is outside of the magic circle, so there should be no danger to the children”

Since the children were the energy source for the ritual, they were in its center. That was common knowledge to a magician.

“Let's do it right away, hurry!”

“You really hate it that much?”

“You're so slim, you don't understand my worries, Sakuraba-senpai!”

”It's not something you have to cry over...”

Thus, Yurika and the others decided to destroy the floor.

PART 9

Even though reason said that it should be safe, there was still the off chance that something might happen. So they decided to make a small hole in the floor and send a camera down it to confirm the

situation. Fortunately, there was nothing below, but an empty large hall stretched out below. Having confirmed that it was safe, the girls could destroy the floor without worry. The actual destroying of the floor was done by Clan's laser that she have often used for working, and a one meter in diameter hole was opened up. A cylindrical concrete slab fell down on the floor below and made a loud noise.

The noise echoed through the empty hall. It would most likely attract enemies, but with the ritual's magic circle nearby, there was no meaning trying to be stealthy. The party didn't worry as they jumped down to the next floor.

“I was wondering what you'd do, but... that's a pretty bold entry method”

An unfamiliar voice welcomed Yurika and the others as they reached the first underground floor. It was a girl wearing a dark red outfit. She was Dark Crimson, a member of Darkness Rainbow.

“You used to be so timid too... I've revised my opinion of you, Rainbow Yurika”

“Crimson-san...”

Yurika firmly held her cane as she looked at Crimson. Not everyone here had met Crimson, but based on how Yurika was acting, they readied themselves as well.

“Why didn't you get in the way?”

“Because it's more convenient this way”

After Crimson's words, the hole leading to the floor above was closed. This was done by the weapons. Upon learning that they

were breaking through the floor, Crimson purposely left them be to lure them in. With the hole closed, Yurika and the others lost their means of escape, which was convenient for Crimson who wanted to wipe them out.

“You sound awfully confident, Crimson or whatever you were called”

”Kurano Kiriha... you may have gotten the best of me last time, but it won't go the same way this time”

“Well, I wonder about that”

Kiriha showed a confident smile, but this was a bluff. This time, Darkness Rainbow were working under a more detailed strategy. If she thought things would go the same as last time, she'd get the rug swept under her feet. That's what Kiriha believed, but she had no obligation to tell the enemy that. With a confident smile on her face, Kiriha racked her brain.

Why did Crimson come alone? There are six in Darkness Rainbow... even if they split in half to guard both this place and the mall, there should still be another two here... what are those other two doing? One of them is without a doubt performing the ritual. Is the other one helping her? Or doing something else? And then there’s the laser and cannon that Maki told us about, how is she going to use those? What can we do to counter it?

All kinds of expectations and countermeasures popped into Kiriha's head. This was her greatest weapon. Her individual strength wasn't all that much, but her brain would accurately choose the road to victory. Crimson was the most cautious of the power that had no shape.

”Green, how will they move?”

Crimson spoke within her mind to Green, who was standing by elsewhere. They were connected with a spell that let them speak with their minds, so a radio or similar device was unnecessary.

"It looks like they have counter measures for the laser and cannon. There are also several futures where they will block normal attacks"

"And if we go according to plan?"

"There is an 80% chance of success"

"That's perfect!"

Crimson cheered within her mind before readying her cane and pulling the lever on the side of her barrel. She was in a disadvantageous situation of 5 vs 1, but she was planning on winning. Her expression was overflowing with confidence.

"Crimson-san, I suppose you can't stand down?"

"What a silly question, Yurika! I'm in Darkness Rainbow so I can fight!"

"Then it can't be helped, I will defeat you as Nana-san's successor!"

"Try it, if you can!"

Crimson made the first move. She swung around her cane loaded with a cannonball and started her incantation.

"Ray of Sunshine—"

"The laser is coming! Yurika, Clan-dono!"

"Mage Shield!"

”Focus the deployment of the distortion field forwards!”

With Kiriha's warning, both Yurika and Clan took defensive measures. Yurika used magic and Clan used science to create a large shield to protect the group. They had heard from Maki that the laser was powerful, so they focused their defenses forward to create a sturdier shield. With the two of them, they should be able to block Crimson's laser.

“—Modifier – Single Wavelength – Target Option – Spread!”

However, here something unexpected happened. For some reason, Crimson pointed her cane in a completely different direction. Yurika and the others were puzzled by her actions, but they'd soon learn of her intentions with their bodies.

“Go!”

The laser travelled in the direction the cane was pointed, but as it reached the wall it changed direction and headed towards the group. In addition, just before it was about to hit, it split, and rained down on Yurika and the others. Since the magical and scientifical shields were directed to the front, they couldn't block this attack.

“Kyaaaaaa!?”

“Ugh!”

Yurika's and Kiriha's expression distorted in pain. Harumi, Clan and Shizuka had been fortunate, and the laser only grazed them, but Yurika and Kiriha took the full brunt of it.

“Reflectors!? This room has been setup to freely let her use lasers!! No wonder she was so confident!!”

Clan quickly realized what had happened. Crimson had bounced the laser of the reflector built into the wall.

“Correct. You jumped into this trap yourselves”

The moment they had decided that they would use this hotel for their ritual, Crimson and the others had made preparations for any possible attacks by the enemy. With the ritual as their bait, the enemy would definitely appear. As long as they approached the ritual site from the surface, there were several places they had to pass through, and those places had been prepared with utmost care. This place was one of those, and the walls, ceiling and floor had gotten reflectors built into them. With reflectors, the laser could be launched and attack the enemies from unexpected directions. It was an extremely advantageous room with lasers as the primary attack method.

“Are you okay, Yurika-san, Kiriha-san!?”

”I'm fine”

“The haniwas protected us”

Fortunately, the laser had lost some of its power by reflecting off the wall and even more when splitting up. As a result, while it might have been a big shock, they hadn't taken enough damage to be incapacitated.

“...But this situation is bad. Because of the reflectors we can't tell how the laser will move. That said, if we put up protection around ourselves, we can't defend against the cannon. This strategy has been thoroughly planned”

Since reflecting the laser would lower the accuracy, it was split up in the end, that's why the power wasn't all that high, meaning they would be able to defend against it if the magical and scientifical shields were deployed around them instead of the front. But if they did that, they wouldn't be able to protect themselves against the cannon. Increasing the area of the shields like that would reduce their strength.

“In that case, it's my turn”

Shizuka stepped forward. As she did, Alunaya called out to her from within.

”Are you sure?”

“This isn't the time to worry about my weight”

”Okay. Then let’s go, Shizuka!”

At this rate, they'd get worn down by the laser. They needed to settle this fast, and in that case, Shizuka was needed. She released some of Alunaya's power and faced Crimson in her half-dragon form.

“Your appearance and magical power are completely different from before. Is this your full power?”

Crimson looked at Shizuka and grinned. Even though she sensed her massive magical power, Crimson's confidence remained. She was confident she could still win, and she also felt rivalry in Shizuka after her previous defeat.

“Something like that. Did you train up your magic?”

Shizuka hadn't forgotten either. She had won against Crimson because Crimson didn't commit to either magic or martial arts. Crimson's confidence was proof of her vigorous training as a magician. Even though she wielded the power of a dragon, Shizuka wasn't going to let her guard down.

“Somewhat”

Crimson pointed the tip of her cane towards Shizuka. As she did, the People of the Earth's spiritual weapons and Forthorthe's scientifical weapons appeared behind her one after another. Yurika and the others could tell that they were there to prevent anyone from getting in the way of Crimson's and Shizuka's battle.

“Here I come, Shizuka!”

”I won't let you!”

Once the weapons group fortified the surroundings, Crimson launched her attack on Shizuka. The barrel attached under the cane was pointed towards Shizuka.

“Explosion!!”

The sound of the cannon being fired shook the entire hall. The cannonball approached Shizuka at frightening speeds.

“Too easy!”

However, Shizuka wouldn't get beaten so easily. She spewed plasma flames from her mouth to intercept the cannonball. While she didn't have as much firepower as Alunaya, it was enough to evaporate half the cannonball, the other half lost all of its momentum and fell down on the floor.

“In the short while since we last met you've learned some ridiculous things”

Crimson was amazed by Shizuka, as she moved on to cast her next spell.

”I won't let you do as you please!”

Shizuka stepped forward to stop her. But the army of weapons stood in her way to shield Crimson.

“Shizuka-san, please continue forward!”

Before the weapons could attack Shizuka, Yurika and the others supported her. Yurika repeatedly fired magical arrows to restrain the weapons while Harumi cast a protective spell on everyone. Kiriha's haniwas and Clan's beam cannon destroyed the weapons in order.

“It's over, Crimson!”

Shizuka slipped past the weapons that were stopped and approached Crimson.

“I don't know about that”

However, this too was part of Darkness Rainbow's plan. Crimson disappeared from right in front of Shizuka.

“What!?”

As a result, the claws Shizuka swung down slashed nothing but air. Surprised, Shizuka looked around the area, but she couldn't find Crimson anywhere. Instead, she witnessed a surprising spectacle.

“The enemies are!?”

The weapons Crimson had brought with her suddenly changed their appearance. The weapon turned into Shizuka and the other four girls. With so many weapons, they turned into four copies of each girl, for a total of 20 copies. Shizuka and the others were stunned by the sudden development, and in that opening, the copies mixed in with the real one, making them indistinguishable.

Green wasn't just skilled at information handling and fortune-telling, but illusions as well. The spell she had prepared beforehand had activated. This was also why Crimson had vanished.

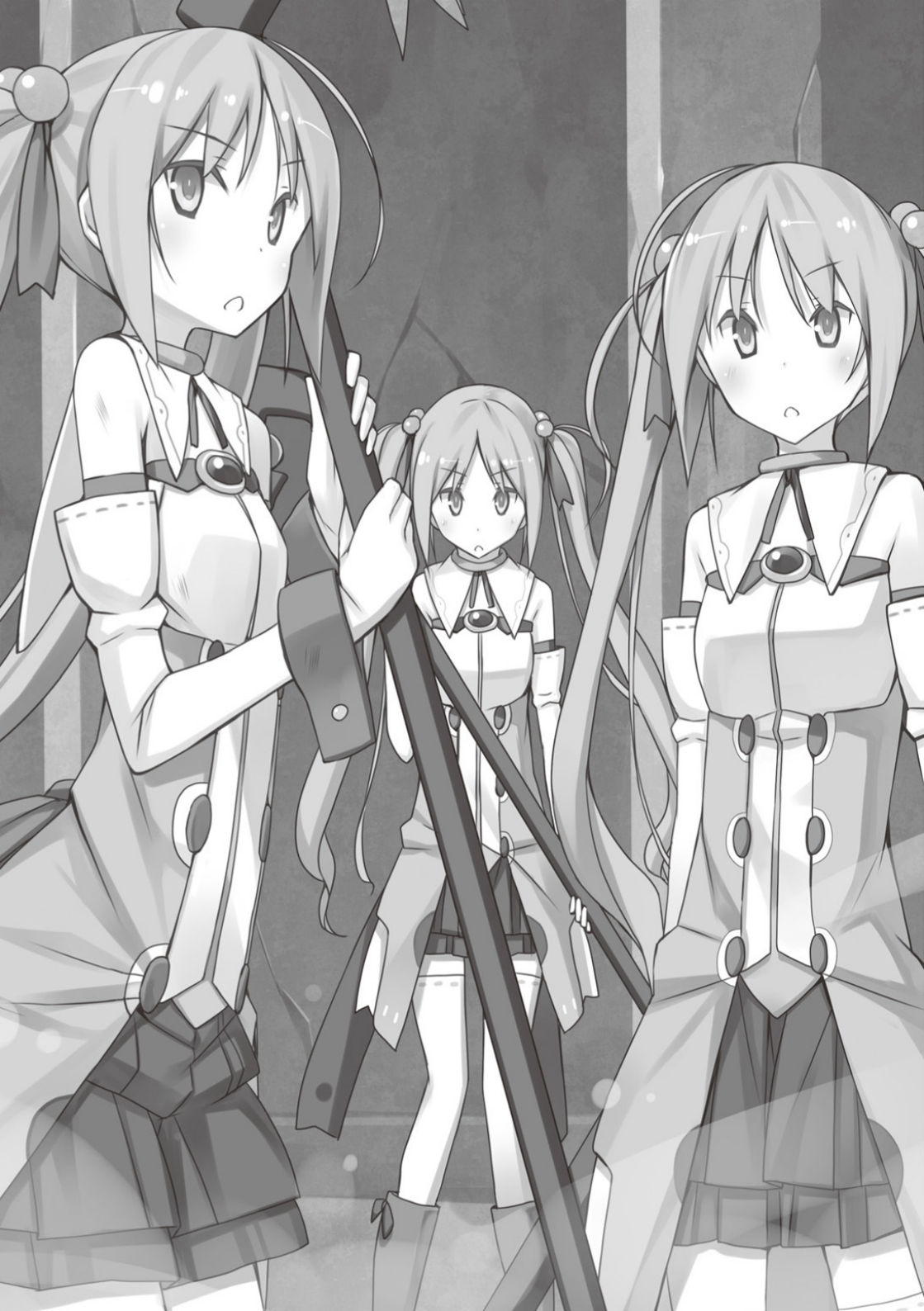
”If I do this it doesn’t matter how strong you are, does it? Or are you going to defeat everyone including your own allies?”

Crimson's bodiless voice echoed throughout the hall. This was why Crimson was so confident. Regardless of how strong Shizuka was, if the situation turned into a brawl when nobody could tell each other apart, she couldn't do anything. Even more so for Shizuka who could eliminate her opponents in a single attack.

“Uncle, can't you tell them apart!?”

”It’s difficult, the user of this illusion is very skilled”

Dragons were blessed with massive magical power at birth, but they were focused on flight and combat, using it very roughly. As a result, they weren't good at delicate magic like illusions, and against someone as skilled like Darkness Rainbow they wouldn't be able to see through it.



”Yurika might be able to do something however”

”Yurika-chan, please!”

“O-Okay!”

Yurika and all the fakes around her nodded. The other girls were in the same situation, they were only able to tell who they themselves were. However, the weapons could communicate with one another and could attack Yurika and the others freely. They couldn't use projectile weapons since they'd be found out right away, but at this rate it was only a matter of time before Yurika and the others would be wiped out. Yurika herself was well aware that she had to do something.

”You think I'd give you the time for that!? Ray of Sunshine!!”

However, Crimson wasn't that naïve. Even while she had vanished from sight she attacked with her laser. While they took some damage from that, the biggest problems to the girls were that they got so distracted by the laser that they completely lost sight of their allies original position. So all they could do now was dodge the lasers while fighting against copies of themselves. Of course that was anything but easy. The weapons did their best not to fight against the real one, so the girls were stuck on the defensive. Yurika didn't have the time to investigate the enemies with her magic.

“Karama, Korama, can you tell us apart from our auras!?”

”It looks like this illusion is taking spiritual energy into consideration too Ho-!”

“We can't tell you apart at all Ho-!”

“Image analysis and thermal vision isn't working either! The illusion was created with avoiding detection in mind!”

”Bingo! We're not going to stay stupid forever!”

Crimson was acting triumphant. Though her expression was invisible, it was clear that she was full of confidence from her voice. Like with Crimson's laser, Green had also obtained scientific knowledge and put that to use in her spells. This was Green's version of scientific magic.

"Come on, take that! I won't be stopping anytime soon!"

"Kyaaa!?"

Pressured by the rain of lasers, Harumi fell to the floor.

"Sakuraba-senpai!"

The nearby Yurika instinctively reached out with her hand. However, Harumi hit it.

"Kyaa!? Senpai, what are you doing!?"

Yurika's hand was protected by her magic outfit, but Yurika was shaken with shock from having been attacked by Harumi.

"Are you okay, Yurika-san!?"

While sympathizing with Yurika, Harumi continued attacking. Yurika ran around, confused, as Kiriha explained the situation.

"Calm down, Yurika, that's a fake!"

"Ah, I-I see... they can even mimic things!"

They didn't just move and sound the same, but they could also pretend getting hit by lasers. Green's illusions were very elaborate, having even been given some intelligence.

Just how can we overcome this situation!?

Kiriha protected herself from several fakes and lasers while desperately racking her brain. Everyone had several wounds. For each time the real one

was hurt, the fakes were hurt in the same place, so there was no doubting that. At this rate they would be annihilated. Something revolutional would be needed.

“Ah geez, I don't care about my weight if I can destroy these things!!”

Even Shizuka was unable to do anything. Since she couldn't tell friend from foe apart, her amazing powers were being wasted. All she could do was grieve.

Weight?

Thought it would seem that Shizuka's grieving gave Kiriha an idea on how to tell the real and fakes apart.

“Clan-dono, the mass! Even if their appearances change, they can't change their mass!”

”You're right! If I calculate the distortion of space, then...!”

Not even an illusion could change the mass of the weapons the illusions were protecting. Even if sound and electromagnetic radiation could be disguised, the space distorted by the mass of the weapons couldn't be disguised. Correcting the distortion in space would require a massive amount of magical power. Considering the amount of fakes, it's hard to imagine that the mass was being disguised as well.

“All the fakes have been locked on!! But there's still that one chance!”

None of the girls weighed more than 50 kilos. Filtering those out, Clan immediately got the position of the enemy. However, there was still the chance that a fake Kiriha had told her that. That's why Clan hesitated to attack.

“There's no need to aim directly at them! Just aim right next to them!”

Kiriha's reply was strange.

“Eh!? ...but there's no time to hesitate, beginning attack!!”

Clan was puzzled, but she didn't have the time to hesitate. Clan ordered the fire control system to attack. Following the targeting data gotten from filtering after mass, the beam cannon she was armed with began bombardment on its own. The aim was right next to the girls. Clan still didn't understand, but she had to believe in Kiriha.

A white flash of a beam grazed the side of one of the Yurikas. As it did, the beam scored a hit in a place where there should have been nothing, opening a large hole. Metal and electrical components peeking through the hole. The next moment the illusion collapsed, and the weapon returned to its original form. It seemed like the attacked spot held something vital as the weapon stopped moving. It was exactly the outcome Kiriha had hoped for.

“Impossible!? What just happened!?”

Crimson's shaken voice echoed out. She was still invisible, but there was no doubt she had been taken in complete surprise.

“It's nothing really. Even though the weapons are covered in elaborate illusions, there are two things that can't be deceived. Mass and shape”

Mass not being concealed was explained above, but there was still a chance of it. Because of that Kiriha had Clan attack just next to the body. Even though the weapons' shapes had been changed by the illusions, they hadn't really changed. Kiriha and the others were just normal girls so they were smaller than human shaped spiritual energy weapons. In other words, while it couldn't be seen, the weapons' real bodies were poking out past their fake shapes.

“It wasn't a bad idea. If you had prepared several women soldiers, we would have lost”

”Kuh, to think there was such a blind spot!”

The strategy was good, but they chose the wrong thing to cover in illusions. Because of that the plan was imperfect, which allowed Kiriha to see through it.

“...Kii... your intelligence is frightening from time to time...”

”Which means, we just have to not hit them directly!”

”Time for a counter attack!”

“I won't forgive you for attacking Yurika-san with my appearance!”

Attacking so that attacks grazed the body wouldn't hurt their allies, but defeat their enemies. Having realized that, Yurika and the others began their counterattack and they defeated the fakes, one after another.

”Again! Curse you Kurano Kiriha!”

”Calm down, Crimson”

”But Green!”

”I heard. You're stalling five people, including Rainbow. That's more than enough of a win”

”...Sorry for whining”

Crimson was enraged, but Green was able to calm her down. Getting emotional was the first step to defeat. That was another lesson Kiriha had taught them.

”It's okay. And Crimson, your chance of victory has dropped below 50%”

”Okay. Let's continue as planned”

”Yes”

Having calmed down, Crimson followed Green's plan. Still hidden, she left the hall. Once her chance of victory dropped below 50% she would stop fighting here.

Even though Crimson had obtained scientific magic and made plenty of preparations, there was still a chance that she wouldn't be a match for many enemies. So Green continued forecasting Crimson's chance of victory, and once it dropped below 50% they would switch plans, as they had agreed on beforehand.

”Crimson, you did good”

”You're the only one that would praise me”

Yurika and the others were still fighting against the weapons behind Crimson, but she didn't even turn to look. 20 weapons were not a big loss, and besides, this loss had already been planned for. As the weapons bought time for her to fall back, Crimson returned to Green's side.

Everyone's Wishes

PART 1

Tuesday, September 14

Green looked clearly relieved when Crimson returned from the hall.

“Welcome back, Crimson”

Seeing her like that, Crimson smiled.

“Oh? Were you worried?”

“Well of course. There's still things I need you to do”

Green was actually just worried for Crimson, but she hid her intentions to protect her standing as a member of Darkness Rainbow. There was also a bunch of things she still had to do.

“Right. So how is it going over here?”

“Ever since your chances of victory started dropping rapidly, the summoning has entered its final phase”

“How many do you think we can summon?”

“With the current magical power, two”

“Hmm, guess it can't be helped”

The ritual Crimson and the others were trying was based on Blue's summoning spell. By using the children as sacrifices, they would summon powerful demons to this world.

However, to fully use the ten children, the ritual would require several hours, so it was likely that they would get interrupted part way through. So Darkness Rainbow had made preparations to use the summoning spell with the magical power they had absorbed until something got in their way.

The amount of time they had spent to drain the children so far was about an hour. The energy was less than a third of what they needed. As a result, they could only summon two out of the expected ten demons.

“Rainbow and the others will be here soon. Let's begin right away”

”Yes. Blue!”

Green raised her hand, and Blue who was working on the ritual at the magic circle nodded and was about to activate the spell. This was where the true battle began.

PART 2

The anomaly began just as Koutarou and the others defeated the last zombie.

As the number of zombies decreased, the chances of the ritual being performed in the shopping mall dropped lower and lower. And as there only a few left, Maki and Sanae reached the conclusion that the ritual wasn't being conducted in this place. So, while Koutarou and Theia fought against the remnants, Ruth opened a communications channel to Clan. However, before Ruth could open her mouth, Clan's voice came through her bracelet.

“Pardomshiha! This is an emergency!”

”What has happened, Clan-sama!?”

Ruth could sense that something had happened from Clan's tone, and connected to Koutarou's and Theia's terminals as well. Those two were in the middle of battle, but they were up against slow moving zombies. They had enough room to spare to listen in on the conversation. Moreover, Maki and Sanae who had been looking over the area nodded at each other and ran up to Ruth.

“Darkness Rainbow activated the ritual!”

”Is that true!?”

“There's no doubt! *cough* *cough* By the time we found the magic circle, they were already in the final stages! *cough*”

The hologram of Clan that had appeared coughed from time to time. The truth was that there was dust all around her. That was when Koutarou's voice interrupted the communication.

“Clan, you couldn't stop it!?”

”Rather than stopping it, they forcibly activated the spell with insufficient magical power! Yurika is saying that they only had about 20% of the energy they needed!”

Listening to Clan's report, the expert in magic, Maki, spoke through Ruth's bracelet.

“Clan-san, what did Darkness Rainbow use the ritual spell for!?”

”*cough* They summoned two large demons! The hotel collapsed because of them!”

Clan was having a coughing fit because the hotel had collapsed. The dust from the concrete collapsing was still all around them.

“W-Wait, Glasses! What about the children!? They're not buried under the collapsed hotel are they!?”

Sanae hurriedly called out. Just being used as an energy source in the ritual, their lives were in danger, but now the building had collapsed as well. If the children died, everything they did today had been for nothing.

“They're fine! But, in exchange for rescuing the children, Darkness Rainbow managed to get away...”

“So the children are safe. Thank god...”

Sanae let out a sigh of relief. She had no memories of it, but she had faced the same danger. She couldn't treat these children as someone else's problems. The same was probably true for Kiriha as well. However, they were now in a situation where the children being safe wasn't enough. Clan showed footage from an unmanned scout in the sky.

“Anyways, look at this! It's the monsters that appeared from the magic circle!”

First the footage showed the resort hotel in the night. However, a few seconds later, there was a sound of something collapsing within the hotel. The next moment a giant and a behemoth appeared as they broke through the entrance glass door. The summoned demons destroyed the hotel as they moved outside. The demons were both around 20 meters large. While it wasn't on the scale of the black hound that Tayuma had turned into, they were giants on the verge of the physical limits. As the two demons roared, the air

trembled. And partially because of that, the hotel collapsed some seconds later.

“I'm having the unmanned scout following them, and the demons are headed for the urban area!”

Next, the footage changed to showing a different place. This was live footage from the unmanned scout, showing the giant and the behemoth descending the mountain. Because the behemoth was lighter, it was some hundred meters ahead, and the giant followed the behemoth's trail. Light from Kitsushouharukaze city could be seen in the direction the demons were headed. At this rate, they would reach the urban area in less than 30 minutes.

“How horrible. Something terrible will happen if they get to the city!”

”So they're so serious they're willing to give up on secrecy!”

Having finished cleaning up the remaining zombies, Theia and Koutarou returned to Ruth and the others. Their expressions were serious. It was obvious what would happen if the two demons entered the city.

“Bertorion, you people follow these demons too please!”

”Alright, we'll be right—”

Koutarou was going to chase after the demons even if Clan hadn't asked him. However, Maki interrupted him mid-sentence.

“Wait, Satomi-kun!”

“Aika-san!?”

Maki panickingly called out to Clan's hologram.

“Clan-san, was Purple over there!?”

”Purple? ...No we didn't see her. All we saw here was Red, Green and Blue”

“Satomi-kun, this is a trap!”

“A trap!?”

”Purple should have been the one that summoned that horde of zombies! Yet that Purple isn't here! Crimson, Green and Blue were in charge of the summoning! So what are Purple, Orange and Yellow doing right now!?”

Darkness Rainbow had seven people, without Maki that made six. Out of those, Crimson, Green and Blue were at the resort hotel, casting the summoning spell. It was possible that the other three hadn't come to Kitsushouharukaze city, but with Purple having unleashed a horde of zombies in the shopping mall, at the very least, Purple was also here. In that case, what was their goal? The answer was obvious.

“They are after room 106! Ruth, raise the alert level of the unmanned fighters! I've given my subordinates the permission to attack! Darkness Rainbow is coming!”

The demons Crimson, Green and Blue had summoned were meant to split up Koutarou and the others. Since they were ten, they originally wanted to summon ten demons, but even with two, considering their size, it was still enough to split them up. And while Koutarou and the others were busy dealing with the demons, Purple, Orange and Yellow would occupy room 106. In other

words, the zombie horde released inside the shopping mall was also part of the plan to create this situation. They needed to split up their forces just like Darkness Rainbow wanted. There was a lot they had to do and the situation was very dangerous.

PART 3

Koutarou's and the others' present problems were, the two huge demons and the defense of room 106. They needed those capable of powerful attacks to deal with the demons. For that, Theia, Ruth, Clan and Shizuka stood out. The three from Forthorthe had massive firepower, and Shizuka had the power of a dragon.

"...Haah... just as I lost weight..."

"Don't cry over your weight, Shizuka"

"You can only say that because you're so light, Theia-chan. Just imagine the boy you love not being able to lift you up when the time comes"

"Tat's certainly a nightmare, but the city will be destroyed if you don't do it"

"I know. That's why I'm coming with you instead of running away"

All four of them could fly through the sky, so they were able to easily meet up in the middle ground between the hotel and mall. They then chased after the demons.

"...Hey, Pardomshiha"

"Yes?"

”Do gentlemen concern themselves with a ladies weight?”

“You mean Master?”

“I-I mean in general!”

”He does seem to mind a little, but he was also worried about becoming too thin”

“Now that you mention it, he did say that a princess shouldn't be unhealthy...”

”Master did?”

“Like I said, in general!”

Their flight speed was fast, and a few minutes after meeting up, the two demons were in sight. Being 20 meters in size, they stood out even from afar.

“Cut the useless banter there. We need to do something about those now”

”They're certainly big when looking at them up close”

“Neither of them are above 20 meters, but since they've been summoned by magic, we can't let our guard down”

Since they were outside, Theia and Ruth could use Blue Knight, and Clan could use Hazy Moon. If they needed it, Shizuka could transform into a dragon. Thinking about it normally, they should be able to win, but since magic was involved, they couldn't make light of their foes.

“Let's go all out and defeat them right away. That would be the fastest and most peaceful way for the city!”

“You mean for your own peace”

“That's also part of the city's peace!”

Shizuka was quick to action and summoned even more of her strength. She was still in her half dragon half human shape, but her body was clad in crimson flames. These flames were from the magical power within her leaking out, and she was going to settle this right away like she had said.

“But I agree that we should strike swiftly as well”

Theia said as she told her Combat Dress' fire control system that the two demons were enemies. As she did, the two large cannons on her shoulders aimed for the giant, the closest of the demons. Ruth and Clan followed suit and got ready for combat. Ruth switched the unmanned fighters into combat mode, while Clan readied her beam cannon. These two were worried that the people in the city would get hurt if the fighting dragged out. That's why these two reached the same conclusion of wanting to settle this quickly.

“Victory goes to those who make the first move!”

Before confirming that everyone was ready, Theia hastily began bombarding. She would defeat the demons as quickly as possible. That was the only thing on her mind.

PART 4

While Theia and the others had begun their attack on the demons, Koutarou and the others returned to Corona House. Using the Blue Knight's teleportation gate, they could return directly to room 106. Fortunately, it was still quiet, and Darkness Rainbow was nowhere to be seen.

“Darkness Rainbow still hasn't come!”

“You're wrong, Satomi-san! They're already here! A ward against people has already been cast!”

However, Yurika was able to see through that the enemy was here right away. Room 106 was unnaturally quiet. They couldn't even hear the faint noise of cars running down the road. This was because a ward against people had been cast on Corona House, despite it being night, it was more quiet than normal. And that let them know that the battle had already begun.

The sound of gunfire from the spiritual energy rifles the People of the Earth used could be heard outside. It was obvious that the sound was being made by Kiriha's subordinates who were protecting Corona House.

“Koutarou, it looks like they cast the ward a while ago and waited with attacking until there was no longer any related left. It doesn't seem like the battle has gone on for more than a few seconds!”

The ward against people didn't just keep the situation inside the barrier from leaking out, but it also made people without a strong motive to remain move away. As result, only Kiriha's subordinates remained, and they were preventing Darkness Rainbow from approaching.

Kiriha had contacted her subordinates as she returned to room 106. Hearing that they hadn't been annihilated came as good news, and brightened her expression up a little.

“Alright, let's go right away!”

That said, if left be, they would be in danger. Though it was dangerous, Koutarou opened the door to room 106 and ran outside.

“Good, you're all okay!”

Kiriha's subordinates were right outside. They numbered ten, and they were using furniture set down as barricades as cover. Thanks to the barricade and Koutarou and the others quick return, there hadn't been any casualties. There was one who was hurt and couldn't move, but their life wasn't in danger.

“You're here, Satomi Koutarou!”

Crimson's voice could be heard. Darkness Rainbow had spotted Koutarou. Even though it was in the middle of the night, the blue armor that Koutarou was wearing stood out. That was the appearance that Crimson was the most cautious of, so she wouldn't mistake it.

“You've sure pulled off something ridiculous”

Koutarou moved up front, and stood facing Darkness Rainbow. In response, the six stopped attacking and answered him.

“During our showdown with Rainbow Heart, having you guys intervene would be a pain. That's why we'll deal with you first”

Crimson said and smiled. Their goal had been Koutarou and the others from the beginning.

Having gotten spiritual energy technology from the People of the Earth's radical faction as well as Forthorthe science from Elexis, Darkness Rainbow didn't necessarily need room 106's magical power. However, it was clear that Koutarou and the others would get in the way during their decisive battle against Rainbow Heart. Their powers shouldn't be made light of, and so, it was decided they would be eliminated first.

“So the summoning spell was to make us divide up our combat potential... or rather, to those with high attack power away”

“Bingo! As expected from those who captured Navy-chan. That's right, if we don't separate you from those guys, nothing will start!”

Dark Orange praised Koutarou with a bright expression. However, that unsuitable brightness unnerved Koutarou. He could understand why Maki was so bad with her.

“Now it's six vs six. Now that we're the same numbers, we can easily go up against you with our new powers”

Purple showed a mature smile full of confidence. Green had come up with most of the plan, but Purple had advised her on some parts. With things proceeding according to plan, Purple was convinced of victory.

The biggest problem for Darkness Rainbow fighting Koutarou and the others, were Theia and the others from Forthorthe and Shizuka. Darkness Rainbow couldn't deal with Forthorthe's weaponry and Shizuka's dragon powers. That's why they had to huge demons. Rather than splitting up Koutarou and the others, they needed to remove the members with high offensive capabilities. In other words, the ritual never needed to be completed. They would confront Koutarou and the others once they had some demons causing trouble elsewhere, removing the most powerful members from the lineup.

That was when Yurika who had been in the back stood next to Koutarou.

“Purple-san, I don't care what you are planning, but I am an arc-wizard of Rainbow Heart. I will stop you in the name of Rainbow!”

Yurika boldly declared, and readied her cane, Angel Halo. In the past, Yurika had only inherited Nana's outfit and cane. But things were different now. She had inherited Nana's love and courage as well. The one standing here was without a doubt, Nana's successor, Rainbow Yurika.

“That's a funny thing to say. You're nowhere near Nana's level”

”Of course. But while I'm fighting instead of Nana-san, I don't have to end up the same as her”

Four girls lined up behind Yurika. Harumi, Sanae, Maki and Kiriha. The four of them were going to help Yurika. She knew that her powers alone weren't all that. However, she had friends. Many friends who had helped each other out all this time.

“I am me. I will fight like myself, and win!”

With Darkness Rainbow being her opponent, Yurika was standing in the front for once. However, that didn't change what she had to do. She would work together with everyone to fight, and return to that everyday life.

PART 5

GOL's, Garb of Lord's, large generator roared and supplied Koutarou's armor with a large quantity of energy. Normally, GOL's role was to eliminate weaker enemies, and create a path for the king, but just improving both offense and defense would help a lot in this situation.

“Hmm, so that's the new armor I've heard about... so scary”

Crimson looked at Koutarou's armor with great interest. This was the first time Darkness Rainbow saw GOL, but they had heard about Koutarou's fighting in the underground from Maya. Yet, they weren't shaken. They were only saying it was scared, but they seemed quite confident that they would win.

“Crimson, that sword dissolves magic, so you can't use magic to attack him directly”

“I know. Why do you think I bothered studying science”

Crimson answered Green as she loaded her cannon. Her new methods of attack were also a way to deal with Koutarou. They had learned from Maki in the past that Signaltin had the power to dispel magic. So instead of using magic, they would transform it into physical force for their attacks. That way, there was no need to worry about spells being dispelled. The cannonball was a lump of steel, and the laser was light. That said, Crimson was a little dissatisfied that she couldn't use her favorite spell, Inferno Fire.

“I think a magician firing off lasers and cannonballs is more scary though”

”Don't you think everything changes with time?”

Using those words as an opportunity, Crimson pointed the cannon at Koutarou and the other Darkness Rainbow members readied their canes at the same time, with one exception. Blue was instead readying a large rifle. Since she had used up almost all of her magical power for the ritual, she would be fighting with an enchanted rifle.

“I agree, knight's have gotten a lot more modern too!”

Sensing that the battle was about to start, Koutarou moved forward with Signaltin in hand. He wasn't naive enough to let magicians make the first move. As he did, the sword began emitting a strong glow.

“Satomi-kun, go all out! I will work with you as best as I can!”

”Please do, Sakuraba-senpai!”

Harumi was responsible for making the sword glow. She was enveloped in the same colored light as the sword and her now silver hair fluttered. Supporting Koutarou with the powers she had inherited from Alaia was Harumi's role.

“Traaa~nsform, Kabutonga!”

Next to Harumi, Sanae made a transformation pose like that of an anime hero. As she did, her body was enveloped in powerful spiritual energy and began glowing. She used her power to strengthen her entire body. Offense, defense and speed, all of her abilities exceeded the limit of man. Sanae chased after Koutarou, leaving behind a trail of light. Her role was to give Koutarou backup.

“Karama, Korama, Spiritual Energy Field to active mode, use the generators excess energy to attack!”

”Understood Ho-! Go for it Ane-san Ho-!”

”Now it's our time to shine Ho-!”

Kiriha used the naginata that changed spiritual energy into power and stepped out in front of Harumi. Thanks to the naginata and the haniwas, she could follow up for everyone at all ranges, but first her role was to guard the defenseless Harumi.

“Here we go, Maki-chan!”

”Yes!”

Finally, Yurika and Maki stood at the back and backed up everyone with magic. There was of course offensive spells, but also defensive

and diversion spells, all together, their work was varied. However, since their enemies were six magicians, the prioritized defense first.

PART 6

In response to Koutarou and the others who divided everything up into roles, Darkness Rainbow sent out Crimson. She was quick and skilled in close combat, and therefore in charge of the offense.

“Explosion!”

She moved up as she fired the cannon attached to her cane. First she needed to stop Koutarou from moving. The recoil from the cannon was large, but she still forced herself forwards. Next to her, five machines created using spiritual energy technology and five unmanned attack vessels from Forthorthe advanced as well. Since they knew he could dispel their magic, Crimson and the weapons would be going up against Koutarou.

“So what if it's a cannon!?”

Koutarou moved swiftly to evade the cannonball. With that he was able to avoid a direct hit, but as the cannonball graced the armor's barrier, it drained it of a lot of energy. That was proof of how powerful the cannon was.

“You're pretty good, Crimson”

”I'm different from before!”

As she spoke, the group of weapons attacked Koutarou. Because the cannonball had sapped the barrier of its power, some bullets slammed into Koutarou's armor. Though that didn't cause any major damage, it was a splendid combination.

“Good job, Green!”

”I do my best!”

Green was controlling the weapons. She manipulated the weapons with her forecasts as her basis. As a result she was able to accurately aim for the weakened parts of Koutarou's barrier.

“Tsk!”

In an attempt to break down the combination between Crimson and the weapons, Koutarou aimed for the weapons. He believed it would be easier than going directly for Crimson.

“It won't be that easy!”

However, his attacks didn't hit. Using her forecast, Green moved the weapons to positions where they wouldn't get hit by attacks. To Green who used information and future forecasts, weapons that fought in an orderly manner on their own were a perfect fit as familiars.

“Once more, Crimson!”

“Yeah!”

Crimson pulled the lever and reloaded another cannonball. At the same time, the weapons under Green's control returned to Crimson's side. The two's combination was hard to break up.

“They're tough!”

“It's okay, Koutarou! Leave this to Guardian Angel Sanae!”

However, before Crimson could attack again, Sanae ran up to cover Koutarou. She pulled back a bow made from spiritual energy and let loose an arrow made from spiritual energy as well.

“Hiiiit theeeem!!”

The spiritual energy arrow split up until several dozen arrows midway and rained down on the weapons Green was controlling. Because the arrow had split into so many arrows, not even Green could dodge them. At best she could order them to group up and defend.

“Mass Protection From Soul Energy”

Just before Sanae's rain of arrows hit, a purple light wrapped around the group of weapons and Darkness Rainbow. This was Purple's spell. Since her specialty was regarding spiritual energy and necromancy, she was the most suited for protecting against Sanae's attacks.

“Muh, you're pretty good, Purple”

Because Sanae's arrow had split up half ways, the power of each one was weak, which meant that they were unable to break through Purple's defensive spell and they were stopped after impacting the weapons a little. Sanae was surprised by that outcome and instinctively praised the enemy.

“I'm surprised. To think there really was someone with divine-level spiritual energy”

The same was true for Purple. While she had blocked Sanae's attack, her defensive spell had been wiped out as well. Normally it was a

spell that would go on for a while, but it couldn't withstand Sanae's attack.

“Karama, Korama!”

“Roger! Let's go, Brother!”

”Let's show them the power of the siblings of fire and lightning Ho-!”

Karama and Korama generated flames and electricity and aimed for Purple. The scorching hot flames and high voltage lightning assaulted Purple.

“Vacuum Wall!”

That was when a wall of vacuum appeared in the attacks way. Once the flames touched the vacuum, they burned out due to the lack of oxygen, and since vacuum doesn't conduct electricity, the lightning was bounced back. This was the act of Orange, who was skilled at changing the state of things.

“It's not working Ho-!”

“These enemies aren't normal either Ho-!”

”Blue-chan, Blue-chan, don't you think those haniwas are cute!? Let's bring them back home!”

”Be more serious. Navy was always getting angry at you because of this”

Blue attacked with her rifle as she spoke to Orange. Her target was Yurika and Maki in the rear. Blue's skills were worthy of praise and

her aim was accurate. When she attacked with summoning magic, she would summon something from afar and ram it into her target. Like summoning lava and pouring that over her enemies. She would often summon weapons as well, so she was used to handling guns.

“Maki-chan!”

“Yes!”

””Force Field!””

Yurika and Maki incanted the same spell in harmony. Since the two used the same defensive spell, two layers of a magical shield stood in the way of the bullets. The rapidly fired bullets smacked into the shields, and easily broke through the first. However, the second shield stopped them in their tracks. Normally the first shield would have blocked the bullets, but Blue wasn't using a normal rifle.

“Blue is right. You have to be more serious”

“Yellow-chan, you bully! You're always scolding me!”

The bullets fired from Blue's rifle had all been strengthened by Yellow. Yellow was specialized in reinforcement and defense. As a result, the bullet tips and bullet speed were strengthened, greatly improving the power behind them.

“We're just about even...”

Koutarou muttered as he readied his sword. Since the attacks on both sides had been nullified so far, nobody had been hurt yet. From that, Koutarou was able to tell that their abilities were about on par.

“This is getting fun. Don't you think, Satomi Koutarou?”

”Don't think I'm like you. There's no fun in fighting for me”

“Hmm... well, I'll still have you play with me”

Crimson pointed the cane towards Koutarou. As she did she glanced at Maki.

So that’s why it’s him, Maki... I kind of understand...

As if sensing that glance, Maki looked at Crimson. Crimson showed her a small smile, before looking back at Koutarou and erasing her smile. There was no time to be sentimental now. The battle was only just getting started.

PART 7

The two huge demons were more than a match for Theia and the other three girls. While they weren't as deadly as Tayuma had been, but they were still 20 meters large combat weapons.

“Your Highness, I've analyzed their barrier strength”

“Hmm, it's not as powerful as I thought”

Theia and Ruth were dealing with the behemoth. When the time came, they had the Blue Knight's bombardment available to them. Hitting the back of the beast would be easy.

“I believe one bombardment from the Blue Knight would be enough to defeat it”

”However, we are near the urban area. We can't bombard as many times as we please. We'll need to stop it from moving first”

That said, it was a beast, it moved fast for its size. Since there was some delay before the bombardment from the Blue Knight hit the ground, they needed to dull the beasts movements first. There, Theia readied the beam rifle in her right hand and charged the behemoth. She was going to attack all of its legs with the fast moving projectiles of the beam rifle.

“Goaaaaaaaa!!”

Having been attacked by Theia repeatedly before, the behemoth let out a loud roar as it noticed her approach. As it roared, shards of ice flew out of its mouth. Just like a dragon could breathe fire, the behemoth had the ability to breathe ice.

“I have no grudges against you, but...”

Theia made use of her inborn kinetic vision, dexterously using her boosters and her posture control thrusters she seemingly fluttered across the sky. The behemoth tried its best to knock Theia down with its ice breath, but it couldn't keep up with her movements. As a result, in less than ten seconds, Theia was next to the behemoth.

“...I can't leave you be like this. Forgive me”

After rapidly firing off her beam rifle at close range, Theia left the behemoth's side just like how she approached. Since it was such a close range attack, she had reduced the speed a little, but instead increased the density of the projectile. The strengthened beam easily pierced the behemoth's right leg, causing massive damage within.

“Gaaaaaa, Gaaaaaaaaaaa!!”

Driven by pain and anger, the behemoth turned around in an attempt to shoot down Theia, but with its right leg out of order, it couldn't chase after her.

“Now, Ruth!”

”Yes, Your Highness!”

Waiting for the behemoth turn towards Theia who was circling around its right side, Ruth approached the behemoth from the rear left side with the four small unmanned fighters she was controlling. The fighters aim was the behemoth's left hind leg. Since it was now so focused on Theia, the behemoth was wide open.

“Guooooooo!!”

The small fighters didn't have as much firepower as Theia did, but the laser fired from the four fighters at the same time accurately burnt off the beast's tendon that rested beyond its outside shell. The behemoth was assaulted by a fierce pain and fell to the ground with a loud sound. With its right front leg and left hind leg out of order, it could no longer stand.

“...If we were to fight against you alone, the outcome might have been different”

The behemoth was facing Theia and Ruth at the same time. Strictly speaking, it was also facing four unmanned fighters as well. When Theia was attacking, it couldn't only focus on her, but if she had been alone, it wouldn't be attacked if it got excited and chased after Theia. And the outcome might not have been so one sided.

“Blue Knight, make a bombardment with direct aim”

“As you wish, my princess”

“...You're best off returning home, and not get caught up in another summoning”

Theia looked at the behemoth with pity in her eyes. It had been summoned and forced to fight. So it was unfortunate that it would have to get hurt so badly.

“Beginning bombardment”

“Show it some mercy and finish it off in a single hit”

“As you wish, my princess”

Theia had learned from Maki that when demons were summoned to Earth, their bodies were created by hardening magical power. That's why even if their body was destroyed, they would simply return to their own world. At least it wouldn't have to die, Theia thought as she looked at the large caliber laser pouring down from the sky.

PART 8

The other demon, the giant, was going up against Shizuka and Clan. However, these two could win whenever they wanted to. The power of the dragon within Shizuka would easily overpower the giant. If there was a problem, it was that Shizuka hated what would happen afterwards.

“If I transform and defeat it right away my weight won't increase that much, right?”

"Yes. That way would be better for the giant. And of course, the people of the city"

"I'm trusting you, okay Uncle!?"

"Y-Yes. I'll do my best to live up to your expectations"

The Fire Dragon Emperor, Alunaya, was overwhelmed by his new niece, but he unleashed his powers in an attempt to hide that.

With her body this size, I think weighing 200 kilos is more healthy though...

With a dragon's common sense it wasn't possible to understand why Shizuka was in such grief. But having Shizuka would be problematic, so Alunaya decided to defeat the demon as quickly as possible.

"Shizuka, you should aim for one of these places"

Clan showed a hologram of the vital points of the human body. Even though its body was made from magical power, its vital points should be the same as that of a living creatures.

"Uncle, remember that"

"Okay"

When unleashing all of her power, the control of Shizuka's body fell into Alunaya's hands. That's why he had to remember to parts to aim for. As Shizuka was looking at the hologram, Alunaya's magical power began overflowing, and eventually she turned into a dragon almost 20 meters tall. At this point, there was no

resemblance of Shizuka. Her body was in the center of the dragon, serving as the focusing point for the magical power.

“Then let's go”

”Good luck, Uncle!”

“Good bye”

Having transformed into a dragon, Alunaya flew away and left Clan behind. Clan saw him off and, while imprudent, thought of something unrelated to the battle.

I’m glad I was light when Bertorion was carrying me...

Thanks to Shizuka, Clan had realized one of the dangers of being a woman that she had gone unaware of until this point.

“Shizuka, how will we attack? There's the plasma breath, magical attack and martial arts”

Alunaya could breathe plasma, with his plentiful magical power he could also use offensive magic, and he was pretty confident in his martial arts. He was confident that he could defeat this enemy with any one of those attacks, but there was a slight problem. That's why he decided to ask Shizuka for her opinion.

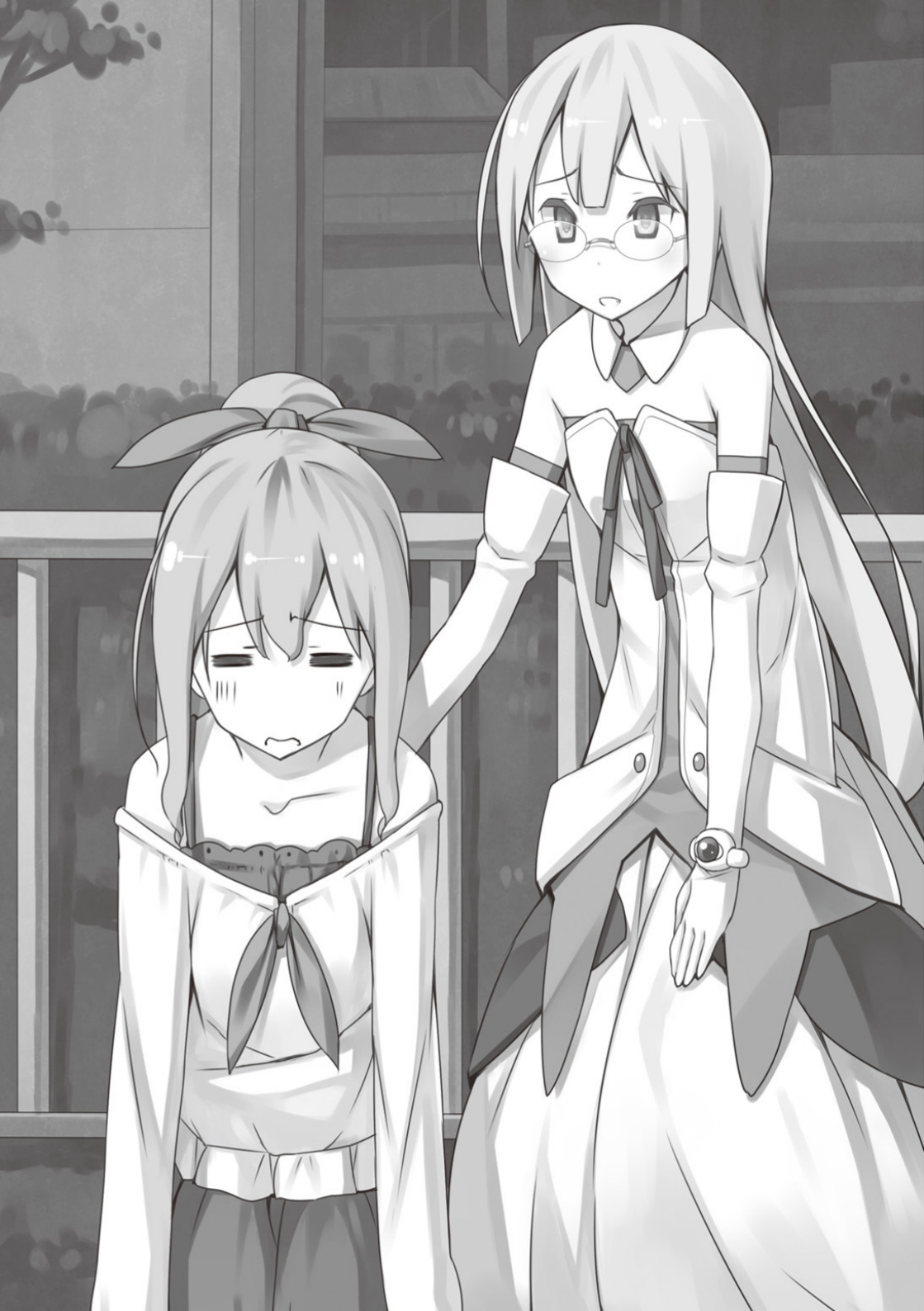
“Martial arts! Of course we’ll go with martial arts!”

Shizuka's answer was determined from the start.

“Why?”

”You’re not allowed to waste magical power!”

The plasma breath and magic attacks would consume magical power. Shizuka wanted to avoid that.



“I understand”

Having understood the circumstances, Alunaya flapped his wings and charged the giant. In close combat there was a chance that Shizuka would get hurt, which Alunaya wanted to avoid. But since she had something she was more scared of than getting hurt, he had no choice. Alunaya bared his claws and fangs and attacked the giant.

“...It's not even a challenge... why did I even come...”

Clan was watching over the battle and let out a sigh. The dragon was going all out from the start. First he crunched down his opponent's right hand to prevent any counterattacks before turning around to slam his tail into the opponent. As a finisher he bit down on the giants neck. Once the giant died, it's body began dispersing. Having lost its body, the giant returned home.

Like that, Alunaya finished off his opponent without even letting it shout. It was a complete and utter victory worthy of the name of Fire Dragon Emperor.

“T-That was terrible...”

Having returned to her original form, Shizuka sat down and held her knees. Seeing her like that, Clan hurriedly ran up to her. She was worried that Shizuka had been hit and was hurt.

“Are you okay, Shizuka!?”

“I'm not okay...”

Shizuka's expression was pale.

"...Biting the giant was terrible... I don't think I'll be able to forget that sensation and taste when biting down..."

"Eh?"

Clan was astonished by Shizuka's words. She hadn't been hurt. She was just shocked by the senses conveyed to her by Alunaya. It wasn't a real body, and the giant hadn't actually died, but that wouldn't console Shizuka.

"Ah, forgive me, next time I'll temporarily sever the connection of senses"

"...P-Please do..."

Just like how the Fire Dragon Emperor couldn't understand Shizuka's worries, Shizuka couldn't understand the Fire Dragon Emperor's eating habits. Because neither of them could understand each other, Clan who felt like there was no point in coming here would have to bring Shizuka back home.

PART 9

The six vs six battle between Koutarou and the others and Darkness Rainbow was progressing evenly. While Darkness Rainbow had overpowered Yurika and the others at the resort hotel, in this place, where they had made no preparations, they couldn't make full use of their powers. The difference in power between the two sides was slight, slightly in the favor of Darkness Rainbow, but with the support of Kiriha's subordinates, that difference was covered up. However a few minutes after their battle began, the balance was broken. The reason for that was Theia and the others defeating the two demons.

"This is bad, everyone. All the futures of the summoned demons reaching the city have vanished. Instead, there's an increase of futures where Rainbow and the others get backup"

Darkness Rainbow were the first to realize. With her ability to read the future, Green had sensed that the summoned demons had been defeated.

"At this rate, we'll lose once their reinforcements arrive. When are they coming?"

"The fastest is in one minute. It looks like they'll come in using some kind of teleportation magic"

"One minute... looks like we're going to have to settle this fast"

Hearing Green's report, Crimson felt like they should hurry up to settle the battle. If they continued like this they would only lose. They needed to finish this within a minute.

"Crimson, I'm against that. We can't afford to lose here. This isn't the battle we should be focusing on"

Purple on the other hand objected to that. If they went all out, chances were they would lose right away as well. Which meant they would be unable to escape in a disadvantageous situation.

"Everyone, please listen. Both summoned demons were just killed"

That was when Blue let everyone that her summoned demons had died. Being the caster, she could tell if her summons died. The battles with the demons had gone as Green had forecast.

"We need to decide right away. Let's vote on if we should fight or retreat"

Purple's decision was swift. Discussing here would only waste time so a majority vote would be required.

"I vote for continue fighting"

"I vote for retreating like I said before"

Crimson and Purple cast their votes. They were the same as they had expressed before.

"I don't want to run home in defeat. I want to beat them first!"

Orange wanted to continue fighting as well. In contrast to her frivolous behavior, she was full of pride. That part of her was Darkness Rainbow like.

"I agree on retreating"

"I think we should retreat as well"

Blue and Yellow wanted to retreat. They were judgments fit of the calm Blue and conservative Yellow.

"What about you Green?"

"I..."

Green wanted to do what Crimson wanted. However, she had forecast that the chances of Crimson dying if they continue fighting increased exponentially. That's why she couldn't agree on fighting.

"...I think we should retreat. I have also made plans for retreat"

"That makes it four against two. We're retreating!"

Thus, Darkness Rainbow decided to retreat. Crimson and Orange would retreat as well. But it still wasn't certain if they could.

PART 10

Koutarou wondered why Darkness Rainbow's movement slowed down for a few seconds. It was slight, but it felt like they weren't really present. However, that reason soon revealed itself as Theia contacted him.

“Koutarou!”

”Theia!”

Koutarou attacked Crimson as he replied. Crimson responded by suddenly bombarding him to get Koutarou out of position, and by the time he recovered she was ready to attack and lasers rained down. However, that was blocked by GOL's active barrier.

“Good news! The demons have been defeated!”

The voice sounded proud, that's why Koutarou figured that they must have gotten a complete and utter victory.

“I see, so that's why!”

He also figured out why Darkness Rainbow had slowed down for a moment. They were probably thinking that they would lose once Theia and the others got back. So Koutarou decided to swiftly close in. In this situation, Darkness Rainbow had two options. Forcing their way through, or retreat. Regardless of which they chose, they would go on the offensive, so it only made sense for Koutarou to attack before that.

“Hm? What?”

”It's nothing, we're still fighting over here! Come back as fast as you can!”

“Got it, just hold on a moment!”

“Senpai!”

”Yes!”

Harumi controlled Signaltin's magical power as Koutarou advanced. Using that power, she increased Koutarou's speed.

“Tsk, so you've figured it out!”

”Don't be so sure, I'm not sure which option you're choosing yet!”

Koutarou swung his sword down. Harumi followed up on that by flooding the sword and its surrounding area with high voltage. A direct hit would probably cause the opponent to faint, but just a glancing blow would stun. In this kind of situation, not killing them would slow down the enemy, so the electrical current didn't need to be all that high. The aim was to slow down Crimson who should be wanting to take to the offensive.

“Crimson!”

However, that was when Green did something bold. She used the remaining weapons she was controlling to shield Crimson. There were currently seven remaining, but with a blow from the lightning infused Signaltin, three were blown apart.

“That forecast magic again!”

By the time Koutarou could swing again, Crimson was already out of his range and the remaining four weapons blocked Koutarou's path.

“You're a lifesaver, Green!”

”It's not over yet!”

However, Green's attack wasn't over yet.

She ordered three of the remaining weapons to self-destruct. The weapons without will did as instructed and self-destructed, blowing up themselves.

“Satomi-kun!!”

”Uwah!?”

Having been at close range, Koutarou was caught in the blast. But thanks to Harumi suddenly increasing his defenses, he didn't suffer any major damage.

I let my guard down, to think she’d blow them up without hesitation!

Since she had blown up valuable combat potential by her own volition, the chance of Darkness Rainbow forcing their way through to room 106 vanished. They would be retreating. For the sake, they would blow up their own weapons, and get their own allies caught in the attack if they had to. Koutarou felt admiration for Green's unhesitant decision making while getting irritated at his own carelessness.

Koutarou had expected Darkness Rainbow to go on the offensive even if they were to retreat, so that their frontline, Crimson, could

retreat as well. If they all went on the offensive and overwhelmed Koutarou and the others, Crimson would be able to escape with the rest.

However, there was another way to let Crimson retreat. That was by attacking everything, including Crimson. In this case, as long as there was an opening to carry Crimson out, they could take her with them. That's why Green had blown up three of the weapons. The last one was probably carrying the injured Crimson with them now.

Koutarou hadn't expected them to attack in such a way that they would injure their own ally. That was because he couldn't imagine himself hurting the girls of room 106. However, considering this a miss from Koutarou's side was a bit cruel. He was just a normal boy. He had a fundamentally different way of thinking from Darkness Rainbow who figured they could just forcibly heal Crimson later.

That said, he couldn't allow them to escape. Koutarou hurriedly scanned the area, looking for Crimson. Sadly, the smoke from the explosion was blocking his view, so he tried looking through the smoke using the ability to see spiritual energy. But he was only able to see past the smoke for a moment. In the next moment—

“Negative Energy Burst!”

—Purple's attack prevented him from seeing. She had used a spell that exploded dark spiritual energy, shocking the people in its vicinity, but since she was exploding spiritual energy, it also prevented anyone who could see spiritual energy from seeing anything. Because of that, neither Koutarou nor the haniwas could see their auras. The next moment, heat and electromagnetic

radiation was cut off, and the haniwas completely lost sight of them. Orange had used a spell to disturb the heat and electromagnetic radiation.

“Harumi, Yurika, Maki, I'm counting on you!”

In this situation, Kiriha left it to the three magicians.

Koutarou and Sanae in the front couldn't see anything because of the smoke and burst. Kiriha's haniwas had lost sight of the enemy. That's why only Harumi, Yurika and Maki could do something about this situation. Fortunately, because they could sense magic, they might still be able to stop Darkness Rainbow.

“Greater Acid Cloud!”

Yurika cast a spell that created a cloud of strong acid. The plan was to create the cloud over where Darkness Rainbow was retreating to cut off their path. Since she was going up against six magicians, they would quickly dispel it, but it should slow them down while they cast their own spell.

“Oh spirits of life that dwell forever within the earth! Gather and become as a single pulse! As that powerful pulse, remove the restrictions of the chosen life form! Carve! Divine Speed!”

Next, Harumi cast a spell that greatly increased the movement speed. She had cast that spell on Maki.

“If we can at least capture one of them!”

Maki was already running as Harumi's spell activated. She was holding her cane, turned into greatsword, in her hands. She ran like the wind and dived into the white smoke cloud. She could only see

white, but Maki wouldn't lose track of Darkness Rainbow. They still hadn't covered up their magical power, so it wasn't difficult to chase after their trail. She also had the layout of Corona House in her head.

“They're just up ahead!”

After running through the white smoke for a few second, Maki caught up to one of the members of Darkness Rainbow thanks to her knowledge of the area. At this point, the smoke was starting to dissipate, and that person's appearance grew clearer.

“So you're here, Maki”

”Crimson!”

Surprisingly, it was the injured Crimson. She had stayed behind to stop Maki and let the others escape.

“Now lets finish this, Maki”

Crimson readied her cane as she staggered.

“Just stop it, Crimson. What's the point in fighting anymore?”

It didn't look like Crimson could continue fighting to Maki. No matter how strong she was, in this state, she had no chance against Maki. Maki struggled to see any meaning in what Crimson was doing.

“Point? Oh there's a point”

“Like what!?”

“I love fighting. That's why I fight. That's enough for me”

Crimson said as she pulled the lever to try and reload a cannon ball. However, the lever was heavy, and while she could do it easily in top form, it was a lot of work now.

“Then what will you do if you die!”

”...Then that's fine too... isn't that the same for you, Maki...”

They wanted the other to be the same as them, but they were different at a fundamental part, and their precious things were different. That's why, while Maki and Crimson recognized one another, they had to turn their backs on each other.

“I'm not wrong. You wouldn't mind dying for what you love either, right?”

“Crimson...”

“Let's fight, Maki. This is all I have. I can't accept any other way of living”

Crimson pointed the tip of her cane towards Crimson. The cane was somewhat trembling. Crimson was at her limit. But even them, she wanted to be strong. That's why she continued to fight, even if she had to exhaust her life.

“So you push through with your way of life too. No matter who you're up against”

“I understand, I won't say anything else”

“I'm glad you're so obedient”

“Hey... Crimson”

“Hm?”

”I won't live as Dark Navy, but as Aika Maki. I wouldn't mind if I died for the sake of that”

”I see... good for you, Maki”

“Thank you, Crimson”

The time between Maki and Karen was already over. The same was true for the time between Navy and Crimson as well. The two disassociated with each other and were now Maki and Crimson. They sought for complete opposites. But they were mysteriously satisfied with that. Because while the paths they walked were different, they understood each other.

“Let's fight, Maki”

”I'll defeat you, Crimson”

Thus, the last fight between these two began. Of course, the conclusion was reached shortly thereafter. One strike from Maki easily knocked Crimson unconscious. Maki had won. However, looking at the bigger picture, this might have been Crimson's victory. In the end, Maki had been stalled, and the remaining members of Darkness Rainbow had escaped from Koutarou and the others.

Maki didn't regret this outcome. Just like Crimson had chosen to fight, knowing she would lose, Maki had no choice but to do this. She was Aika Maki, she was a lonely and ordinary girl who cared

for her friends. She would be able to live like that from now, alongside her many friends.

PART 11

After the battle between Darkness Rainbow and Koutarou and the others was over, Elexis ordered the computer to finish its data collection as he stretched his body. Noticing that, Maya approached him.

“Is it over?”

“Yes. I won't be able to fully tell until I analyze it, but... we've probably gotten the necessary data”

Elexis stretched once more and squeezed his own shoulder. He had been staring into the computer the entire day so his shoulders were stiff.

“But still... how wicked of you. To use Darkness Rainbow as a decoy to gather information”

”Decoy makes it sound so bad, if you look at the bigger picture, it's for their sake as well”

”Having an excuse like that is just the proof of a villain”

Elexis had been gathering information in preparation for the decisive battle between Darkness Rainbow and Rainbow Heart. One example was the frequency of the gravitational waves Theia used to communicate with the Blue Knight. Having information like that would make the battle progress in their favor. By analyzing the information, they could obstruct, throw out fake information or do all kinds of things.

“Are you sure you can be talking about me like that?”

”Oh? Are you going to call me an evil woman again?”

“I wouldn't dare. You are my angel”

“You really are a villain. I hate you, El”

“My, my”

Maya was the same. She had been gathering information regarding magic. However, in her case, the charm she had left to Purple gathered information from its surroundings, so she didn't need to stare into a computer like Elexis, so instead she was lying on the sofa in Elexis room, watching over the progress.

“Hey El”

“Hm?”

“Do you think we can win?”

Maya had been showing a provocative expression full of confidence up until now, but right now there was some unease mixed in. Even she couldn't help but feel nervous over what they were about to do, considering the scale of it all.

“When you say things like that, you start to look like a normal girl”

The past Elexis might have been disappointed in her. But the current him didn't feel that way. He himself was confused by that.

“There are times like that every so often”

"...Well... I can't even imagine how things will play out, but I've done everything I can. If this doesn't work, there's nothing I can do, and I can give up"

"You're right. I'll think like that as well"

Maya was the same as Elexis. Showing her weakness to others was something the past her would never have even thought of doing. However, for some reason she felt no resistance in exposing herself to Elexis.

"By the way, Maya"

"What?"

"It's about if we lose this next fight"

"I don't even want to think about that"

Maya showed a depressed expression. She had no confidence that they'd win, but she didn't want to imagine they'd lose. It was a perfectly natural reaction.

"Well, could you at least listen. If we lose... won't you go on a voyage across the stars with me?"

"That's an awfully romantic invitation"

"That's not quite right. I'm inviting you to rampage across the galaxy"

"As pirates?"

"Something like that"

Elexis dropped his shoulders.

Upon hearing Elexis' proposal, Maya began returning to usual self. Elexis didn't hate Maya's weak side, but he liked her when she could proudly stick out her chest. That's why he was satisfied with this result.

“That doesn't sound too bad. I'll think about it”

“Alright, then it's decided”

“Hey, I just said I'll think about it. Don't go and decide on your own”

”If you don't like something, you'll say so right away”

“...You really are a villain”

“That's why you're my partner”

“I've been wondering about this for a while, but you're making a fool of me, aren't you?”

“Of course not. You are my angel”

”I really do hate you! I won't be a pirate either!”

“My, my”

Maya's and Elexis' silly conversation continued for a while. They certainly didn't look like the masterminds behind the party trying to overthrow the magical kingdom of Folsaria. That was perhaps the answer to everything, but the two were so focused on their purpose that they didn't notice.

PART 12

After repelling Darkness Rainbow, Koutarou and the others quietly returned the children to their homes. However, they also erased their memories of being kidnapped. It wouldn't be strange for them to develop a trauma from that experience, and there would be problems if they started talking about magicians. It was a necessary action in more than one way. Since the ritual hadn't drained the children of a life threatening amount of spiritual energy, this was the end for the serial kidnapping for the time being.

“Geez, we're finally done”

Having returned to room 106, Koutarou leaned down over the tea table and let out a sigh. It was already just before dawn. As they had spent the entire night resolving this incident it was only obvious that they'd be tired.

“Everyone, go home and rest. There's lots that we need to talk about but that can wait after we get some sleep. Good work tonight”

Even Theia, who was normally more energetic than anyone showed signs of exhaustion. If she was like that, the other girls were surely even worse for wear. Everyone was sleepy from the relief and exhaustion. Everyone wanted to get some sleep, except for one person.

“Please wait. Does everyone have a moment?”

That person was Yurika. She was still very tense and looked the nine with a serious expression. It was as if the battle was still going on.

“What is it, Yurika?”

Hearing Yurika, Koutarou slowly looked up from the table. As he did, he saw her serious expression. Since it was the kind of face he didn't want to see on her, his mind cleared up right away.

“There's something I would like to ask of everyone”

Hearing Yurika's serious tone, the girls returned to the tea table. Yurika waited for everyone to gather before continuing.

“Darkness Rainbow should be challenging Rainbow Heart to a decisive battle very soon”

That was a conclusion she had reached because Darkness Rainbow had kidnapped children and summoned huge demons without thinking of the consequences. This time, everything had ended well because Koutarou and the others managed to suppress them, but if they hadn't who knows what would have happened. It probably would have gotten extremely difficult for Darkness Rainbow to operate in Kitsushouharukaze city anymore. Despite that they had gone ahead with their plans, which meant that they were in a situation where they didn't care about that. That was Yurika's basis for thinking that Darkness Rainbow wanted to finish everything once and for all.

“If that happens I'll cooperate. Or rather, is that what you wanted to ask?”

”No, it's not. If that decisive battle starts, many will lose their lives regardless of which side wins. That's why, before the battle begins—”

Yurika looked at each of her friends one at a time as she spoke. After taking a good look at everyone, a strong sense of

determination resided within her eyes and she spoke in a dignified manner.

“—I want to attack Darkness Rainbow's HQ and make sure the decisive battle never happens in the first place! For that sake, I need everyone's help!”

Having grown as a magical girl, and wanting to follow Rainbow Heart's policy, Yurika wanted to avoid actively attacking. However, now she had finally made up her mind to attack. She believed that the situation was so dire that she had no other choice.

Afterword

Happy new year everyone, it's the author, Takehaya. This time I've safely delivered volume 18. I hope you enjoyed it. That's right, volume 18 is actually the 20th installment in this series (Thanks to the side stories there are two more volumes). When I imagine my readers with 20 volumes lined up on their bookshelves, I get a little excited. There's not many works that make it this far, and combined with the anime, I am grateful for being blessed with many fans. We're entering the sixth year, and I am very grateful for the continued support. Thank you very much, and I hope you will continue to support me in the future as well.

Now then, about this volume, and the next, the magical girl arc is unfolding. And I figured since I'm splitting it up in two arcs, I wanted to get a closer look at different characters, which is why I focused more on Maki this volume.

Maki had her background of coming from Darkness Rainbow, with a dark past and connected to various people. This time, her relationship with Dark Crimson was portrayed in particular. While Maki and Crimson accepted each other, they couldn't come to an understanding. And these two finally clash, which I believe is one of the best parts of this volume. I hope those of you who have read this volume find the conclusion satisfactory.

Since Maki got a close up this volume, Yurika will be getting one next volume. Having become a true magical girl after spending such a long time, Yurika finally resolves herself to fight Darkness Rainbow. The story's setting will move to the magical kingdom of Folsaria in search for a fundamental solution to the problem. However, Rainbow Heart and Darkness Rainbow have fought for several hundreds of years, so the solution won't come so easily. And

how will Yurika confront that? That will be covered in the next volume, and I hope you will enjoy it.

I'm actually writing this afterword on the night of Christmas Eve. With the new year in sight, I am finally done with this year's work, and I was lazily spending the day. As I take it easy, everything that's happened this year pop into my head. It has been a busy year and there is so much to remember.

Around this time last year, and the scenario for the anime began being written, I sat down in several meetings per month. This was also around the time I first met with the voice actors. All the new voice actors looked so nervous they might drop dead. They all huddled up in a corner. I remember them having a cuteness you would find in trembling small animals. I might however be a little sad that now that they're more experienced and have matured, they've gotten rid of that trembling cuteness (lol). Anyways, please continue doing your best everyone.

A little bit after that an event was announced. And that was around the time I really felt like an anime of my work was being made. After that, as the voice recording began, I started getting really busy with the meetings. There may also have been a time where I wondered if I'd have enough time to work on the novels. In the end, it all worked out somehow though. Thats' why I think I was the most busy during the summer, and before I knew it, the anime was already being broadcast. However, as we got into august, my work on the anime was gradually reducing, and the number of meetings dropped. By the time fall arrived my anime life ended, and I returned to being a normal author.

Once my workload returned to normal, I decided to get a bike license. Seeing the beginner voice actors try so hard, I wanted to try

something new as well. That's why I was writing and practicing riding a bike everyday during fall. Doing something you've never tried before is very stimulating and refreshing. If you lived life normally you'd never get a chance to take the exam, so I felt like it was time to show some guts. But, maybe because of my age, I failed the exam when trying to cross the narrow plank bridge (lol). According the the instructor the sense of balance is directly affected by age. However, he also said that driving posture is more important than balance when crossing the narrow plank bridge. After improving my posture, I passed the exam the next time I took it. When picking a bike I picked something basic and faithful, rather than something adventurous. Recently, I've been taking the bike to head over to a distant ramen shop every so often.

After I got used to driving a bike, there was the Rokujouma no Shinryakusha event in December. It was fun meeting everyone involved after such a long time and I finally got a sense that this was the end of the year. I was also moved that a hall that could fit 700 people was filled with fans. I would like to give my thanks to everyone that showed up. With the final event over, I fully returned to my normal life before the anime was made. Half a month has passed since then, and now I'm looking back at the year that's passed.

What I've felt this year is that people should challenge themselves to new things. Thinking about it, I feel like I haven't tried anything I knew was fun, or would succeed ever since I became an adult. It might be because I'm relying too much on information. When I was a kid, I didn't think too much ahead and jumped into everything, experiencing all kinds of things.

Since most of my readers are high school students, this might not make sense yet though. However, after some more time passes and

you become adults, you might feel your life getting more trivial, if that happens, try something new without considering the results.

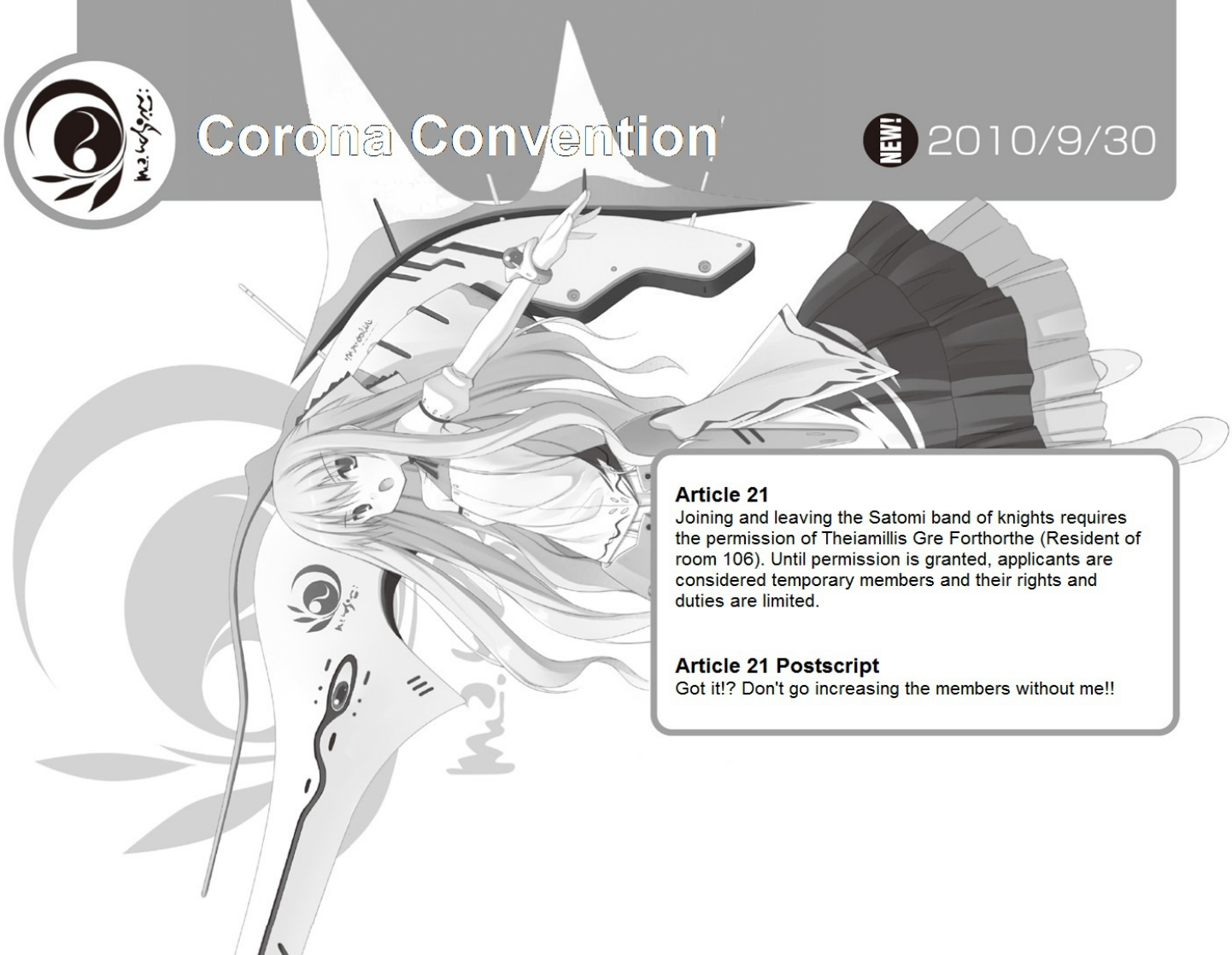
What should I do next year. Since I can feel my stamina going down with each passing year, maybe sports would be a good idea. Maybe I should learn some martial arts. Or maybe some ball game. I still haven't decided, but I am planning on trying to challenge something new.

That's right, I have some news to share. I don't know if it will have started when this volume is released or not, but HJ Bunko will be starting up a new site called 'Read it! HJ Bunko'. Some short stories from room 106 will be posted there with some regularity, those of you who are interested please take a look at HJ Bunko's site. I'm sure you can reach the new site from there.

That's about all the space I have for afterword, so I believe it's time to wrap it up. Lastly, I would like to give my regular greetings. I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to everyone at the editorial department, Poco-san who is in charge of the illustrations and to all the readers who bought this volume.

Then let us meet again in the afterword of volume 19.

December, 2014 Takehaya


Corona Convention
NEW!
2010/9/30
Article 21
Joining and leaving the Satomi band of knights requires the permission of Theiamillis Gre Forthorthe (Resident of room 106). Until permission is granted, applicants are considered temporary members and their rights and duties are limited.
Article 21 Postscript
Got it!? Don't go increasing the members without me!!